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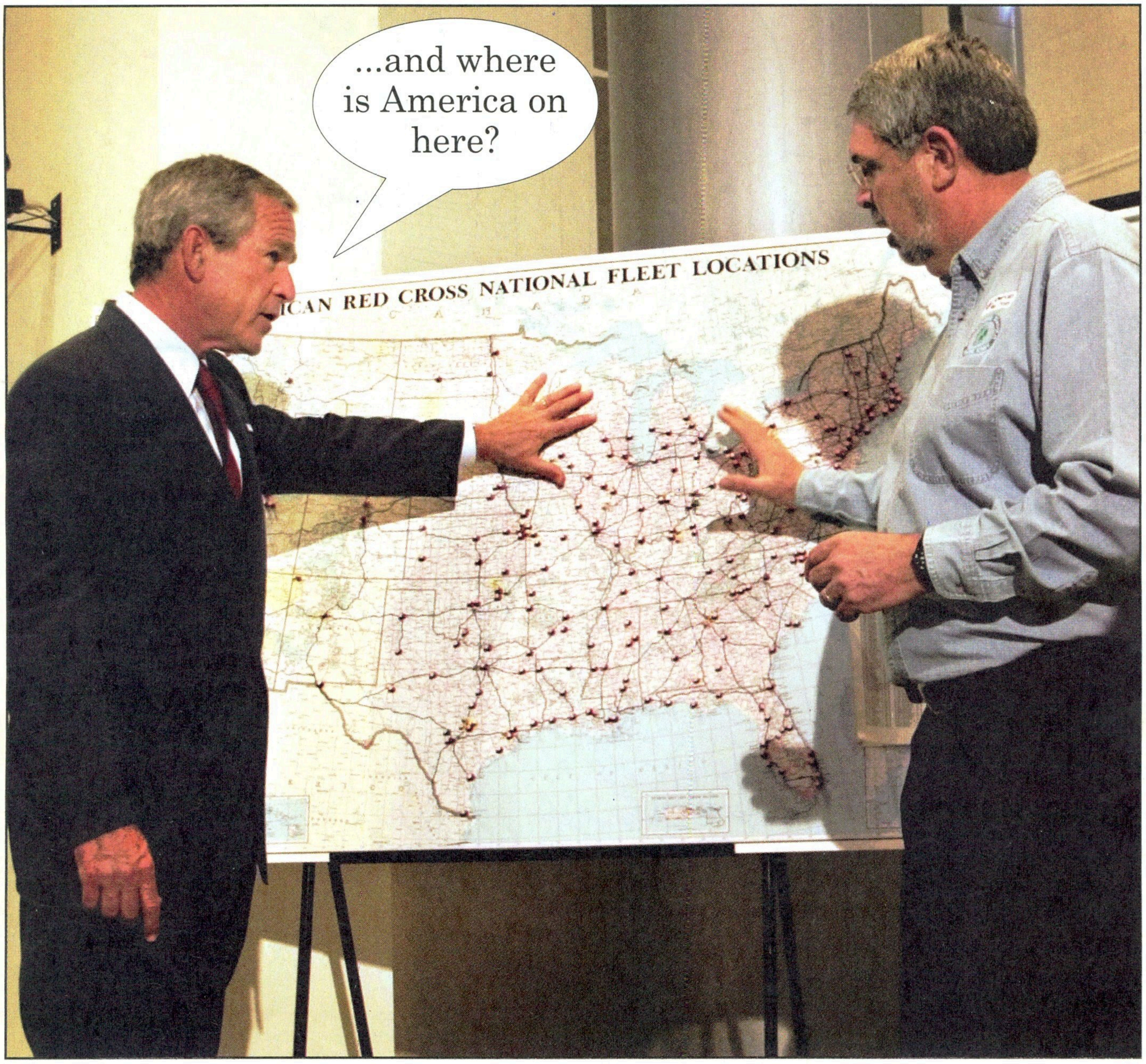
NEW ORLEANS DISASTER LATEST

BUSH TO ACT



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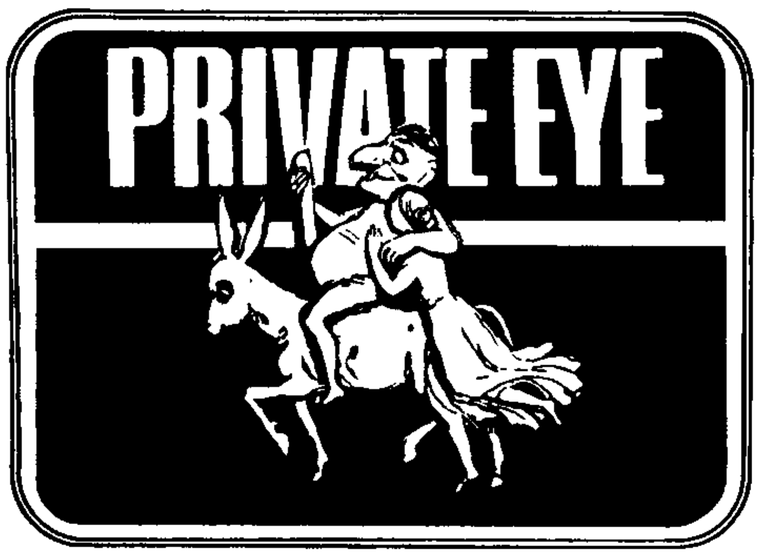

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AMID all the buck-passing between state and federal authorities over who betrayed the people of New Orleans, one organisation keeping its head down is the private firm responsible for disaster planning in the region.

Last year the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) farmed out responsibility for hurricane preparation to a consortium led by a Louisiana firm called Innovative Emergency Management (IEM) under a $500,000 contract. Following a simulation exercise, IEM produced a worrying report last December. A follow-up conference took place in, er, August. Too late. Although, in fairness, there was little IEM could do without cash commitments from FEMA.

As journalists worldwide Googled for new angles on the disaster, the Baton Rouge-based consultancy had made a swift edit of its website, but it wasn't cunning enough to avoid the bloggers (www.leninology.blogspot.com) who captured images of the site before and after the edits.

References to IEM's work in New Orleans were suddenly purged, including a June 2004 press release headed "IEM team to develop catastrophic hurricane disaster plan for New Orleans and Southeast Louisiana" which boasted of its CEO Madhu Beriwal's special merit award for hurricane emergency preparedness.

Several days later the press release was back on line, except that a footnote had been added with the caveat that one company in the "team" listed, emergency management firm James Lee Witt Associates, did not actually participate in the project. James Lee Witt was director of FEMA during the Clinton administration. Over at the JLW Associates website, the firm has already publicly distanced itself from the catastrophic catastrophe planning, noting that after the initial IEM proposal to FEMA it was "not approached again by IEM" and had "no involvement whatsoever in the project".

Meanwhile, IEM is responsible for reviewing emergency preparedness systems at several commercial nuclear power plants in the US, for chemical, biological and nuclear preparedness in several states and for developing emergency management systems for the US's chemical weapons stockpile. Crumbs!

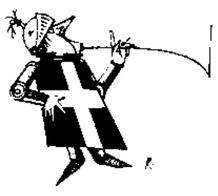
"The price of petrol is outrageous"

WHO WILL take the top mandarin's job at the ministry of defence when Sir Kevin Tebbit retires later this year? Three applications for the permanent secretaryship were received before the deadline on 9 September. Incredible to relate, one of them came from a certain Richard Hatfield.

Eye readers may recognise the name. He is the MoD personnel director, best known for his treatment of Dr David Kelly and his pompous and arrogant performance at the Hutton inquiry. He assured Hutton that the care and support he showed towards Kelly was "outstanding" – a claim described as "risible" by Jeremy Gompertz QC, counsel for the Kelly family. Even Hutton, despite his reluctance to criticise anyone in Whitehall, concluded that Hatfield's department was at fault in not warning Kelly that his name would be publicly confirmed if a journalist suggested it.

According to Kelly's friend Julie Flint: "Had David had support from the people he was in daily contact with in the MoD – most importantly the personnel chief Richard Hatfield, who read him the riot act on three occasions – he would not have felt so isolated that he had no alternative in his own view but to kill himself."

Will the MoD really have the nerve to promote this ghastly bureaucrat to the top job? We shall see.



EYE TOLD YOU SO

"A former Scottish police chief has given lawyers a signed statement claiming that key evidence in the Lockerbie bombing trial was fabricated. The retired officer – of assistant chief constable rank or higher – has testified that the CIA planted the tiny fragment of circuit board crucial in convicting a Libyan for the 1989 mass murder of 270 people."

– *Scotland on Sunday,* 28 August 2005.

"The whole story stank. It... suggested that the fragment, even if it was genuine, was anyway unlikely to be conclusive evidence of the type of timer used at Lockerbie."

– *Private Eye* special report on Lockerbie by Paul Foot, May 2001.

WHY did Gate Gourmet hastily set up two new companies the day after the initial talks at Acas between it and the TGWU that were aimed at ending the airline catering dispute?

Gate Gourmet Purchase Company and Gate Gourmet Heathrow Purchase Company were launched last month with no staff, turnover or shareholders, and without the involvement of any parent company. The address listed, however, was Building 1071, Southampton Road, Heathrow Airport – the same as that of the companies in dispute at the Gate Gourmet group.

Initially the nominee directors were listed as "Swift Incorporations Limited" and "Instant Companies Limited", both of 1 Mitchell Lane, Bristol – a common trick for those setting up companies in a hurry. But last week Stephen Wood and Richard Schifter were listed as directors. They are currently directors of the Gate Gourmet Heathrow and Gate Gourmet UK companies that the new "Purchase" companies appear to shadow.

So did this have anything to do with American boss David Seigel's constant whinge that the UK companies are being "forced" into liquidation by "hardline" catering workers? Who knows! When the *Eye* asked Gate Gourmet's PR company, Gavin Anderson and Co, what it all meant, it declined to say. And it may be some time before anyone finds out what the new companies are about: they do not have to file accounts until June 2007.

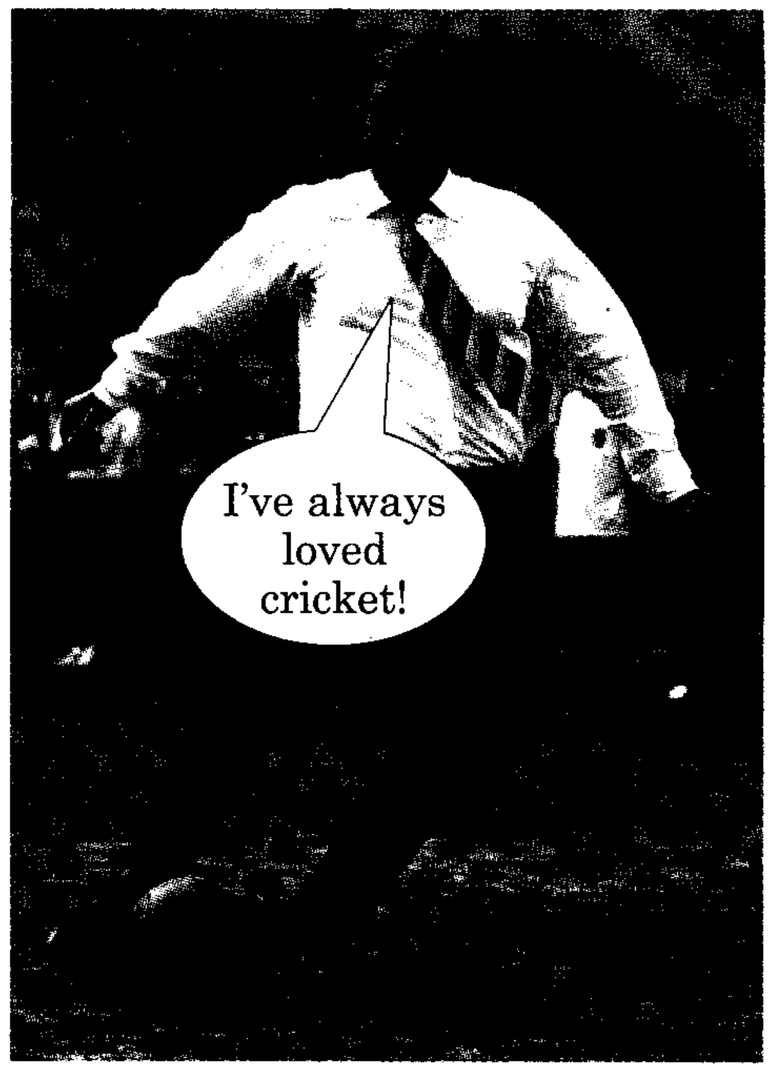
THE long process of deciding who will run the lottery from 2009, when Camelot's current licence ends, is about to begin with a "draft statement of main principles" due from the national lottery commission this autumn.

So how well has Camelot run the show these past few years? Very nicely indeed, thank you, if you happen to be a Camelot shareholder.

Taking the figures from Camelot's annual reports from 1999 to this year, after it retained the lottery in 2001 sales continued to slump until the lowest ever point in 2003. They have climbed back a bit since then and are now six percent down overall on 2001. The total kept by retailers is down from £258m to £246m. And the amount given to "good causes" via the national lottery distribution fund each year has dropped 12 percent from just over £1.4bn to around £1.25bn.

And the amount retained by Camelot? Down too, you might think. Er, nope. The amount retained by Camelot in return for running the lottery in 2004-5 was £312m, compared with £267m in 1999-2000. That's a 17 percent rise. Trebles all round!

ASHES VICTORY



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ABC

NEWS

THE revolving door to the prime minister's office has turned out another suit: Tony Blair's senior transport adviser since 2002, Matthew Elson, who is joining WS Atkins, a firm doing very nicely out of government transport policy.

Atkins proudly boasts that in his time at No10 Elson, who used to be a McKinsey consultant, "covered many of the key transport policy issues of the past three years, including road pricing, the London Underground PPP... and the 2004 transport white paper". No wonder it has made him its "transport bid director" and put him on the board of its management consultancy division.

As Elson himself modestly put it: "My appointment signals that Atkins... is aiming to win yet more work which puts us at the forefront of projects which are helping to shape Britain." Presumably that's projects like the under-performing underground PPP contract Atkins won as part of the Metro consortium.

The transport white paper which Elson was so instrumental in drafting is full of plans that will require the services of consultants and PFI contractors like Atkins and even – without irony – praises "the efficient management provided by the private sector on the tube PPP"). Now the man in charge of winning new business for Atkins can rub his hands gleefully at the commercial opportunities his policies have opened up.

WHEN the Bank of England's monetary policy committee (MPC) changes the base interest rate, most banks and building societies alter theirs too. Some, however, take the opportunity to extract more money from their customers than is strictly necessary.

August's 0.25 percent base rate cut, the first for two years, offered just such a chance and the bank that took the greatest advantage was Lloyds TSB. *Moneyfacts* research group has found that Lloyds and its Cheltenham and Gloucester subsidiary cut rates on savings accounts by up to 0.45%, having already reduced them by up to 0.15% weeks before the cut.

There is nothing to stop banks cashing in like this as the only regulations covering savings and mortgage rates are contained in the voluntary banking code. The last time anyone had a serious look at this was in 2001 when the government appeared keen to do something about banks ripping off their customers and asked former MPC member Deanne Julius to review the code. She concluded that customers needed better information so that they would move their accounts if their bank gave them a bum deal (even though bankers know that when they send out details of their new rates the letters usually go straight in the bin).

Shortly after reaching this conclusion Ms Julius was made a director of, er, Lloyds TSB, whose customers she presumably hopes are now looking at the cuts in their savings rates and wondering where else to put their money.

WITH former BBC director-general John Birt installed as head of Tony Blair's Blue Skies unit, it wasn't going to be long before Birt-speak pervaded Whitehall.

A fine example comes from the ministry of defence, for whom Atos Consulting is developing its "Facilitator's Guide for the Rich Picture 2 (RP2)" program.

And what might that be? According to a document Atos is circulating internally at the MoD, "RP2 is a tool to help facilitate change by engaging people in discussions about the impact of change and the direction it is taking".

The accompanying Powerpoint presentation talks about "complex messages", "diverse audiences", "exploring implicit and explicit visual metaphors", "a cultural dynamic of innovation", etc, etc, etc.

Civil servants with other examples of consultancy gibberish complicating the simple process of employees communicating with one another are welcome to contact the *Eye*.

Street Of Shame

TIM ALLAN claims that in handing a videotape of John Humphrys' controversial after-dinner speech to the *Times* he was motivated merely by outrage that a *Today* programme presenter "had stated that you had to be a liar to be a minister. I could not believe that he had said that."

Allan's concern for the integrity of British broadcasting is touching – but certain facts should be remembered.

Clients of his Portland PR firm include Sky – indeed Allan formerly worked at the satellite station's corporate communications department. Sky and its boss, Rupert Murdoch, have always seized upon any excuse to make the Beeb squirm. The paper to which Allan provided the tape was, of course, another Murdoch oupost – and the *Times* hack to whom he gave it was none other than Tom Baldwin, veteran of many a Downing Street dirty-tricks campaign against the BBC. Baldwin also happens to be a very close friend of Allan.

In March 1997, when Allan was Alastair Campbell's deputy, the Labour spin machine landed itself in hot water when it breached the rules on Commons privilege by leaking a standards and privileges committee report on sleaze allegations against Neil Hamilton to the press. When the BBC found out about this and prepared to air the story, Allan put in a call to *World at One* editor Kevin Marsh begging him to kill it: "If you run this story, I'm finished." The Beeb did run it, albeit in a toned down form and on the *PM* programme. Allan and Campbell were incandescent.

Later that year Allan was involved in planting on the BBC a bogus allegation that Chris Patten faced prosecution under the official secrets act. His motive was to distract attention from Robin Cook's affair with Gaynor Regan. But the BBC then exposed the stunt, much to Allan's fury. He retaliated by leaking yet another fictitious story, to the effect that Tony Blair never listened to the *Today* programme.

Now, in one fell swoop, Allan has managed to help his chum Baldwin, take revenge on his old enemies at the BBC – and cause huge embarrassment for his commercial client's main rival. A fine day's work.

FOR ALL the acres of broadsheet and Berliner-size newsprint the *Grauniad* – or, as it is now appears to be called, the *grauniad* – devoted to its slight shrinkage, editor Alan Rusbridger did not find room to share with his readers one aspect of his future plans they might find mildly more interesting than the shift from Helvetica Bold to Egyptian.

"If I had to choose between occupying a niche on the left or being nearer the centre, whether you display that through your news reporting or your comment or both, I'm more comfortable saying this is an upmarket, serious, mainstream newspaper," Rusbridger told last weeks' *Press Gazette*. "There's more potential for growth there than taking comfort in political positioning."

Since this is the sort of thing *Guardian* readers tend to find very discomforting, one might have expected Rusbridger to have found space in the four pages the paper devoted to the forthcoming redesign to mention it. But while readers were regaled with everything they never wanted to know about the "slightly wider 9.5pt vertical spacing for the body font on news pages", there was not a word about the paper's politics anywhere to be seen.

Number crunching

17,410 ■ Words in articles about the new Berliner size paper in last week's Guardian and Observer

9,767 ■ Words in articles about Tony Blair in last week's Guardian and Observer

SIZES change, typefaces transform, but some things will always remain the same at the *Grauniad*.

The very first edition of the new-sized paper, probably the most pored-over and double-checked piece of newsprint anywhere in the world that day, carried a picture of Dame Judi Dench decked out in Elizabethan finery, complete with rotten teeth and an enormous ginger wig.

The caption beneath it read: "Majestic... as Queen Victoria in *Shakespeare in Love*."

"The Berliner format's much better for news."

THE *Sun*'s Victoria Newton was almost apoplectic at the news that *Big Brother* winner Anthony Hudson had turned down £10,000 to star in an advert for a "CD of Seventies music" less than a fortnight after his victory on the reality show.

"SERIOUSLY DELUDED!" was the banner headline on her Bizarre column on 26 August, above the revelation that "the brainless chimp knocked back the money because he 'wants to be taken seriously'.

Impressive though this display of invective was, Newton omitted to mention one fact which readers might have thought was relevant: the CD in question was the "Medallion Man Lurve Songs" freebie given away with the *Sun* the following Saturday. Oh, and the paper was only offering Hudson two grand to promote it, not ten. And the reason his agent gave for turning it down was not that he wanted to be taken seriously, but that it was "a really crap idea".

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Because hurricanes form over warm ocean water, it is easy to assume that the recent rise in their number and ferocity is the result of global warming. But that is not the case, scientists say."
– *International Herald Tribune*, 31.8, page 4.

"The hurricane that struck Louisiana and Mississippi on Monday was nicknamed Katrina by the National Weather Service. Its real name is global warming."
– *International Herald Tribune*, 31.8, page 6.

THE Mirror group – in no way bitter that it was outbid by Richard Desmond's *OK!* and *Daily Star* for the exclusive picture rights to the wedding of Jordan and Peter Andre – took a dismissive line on the famous pair's big day.

"Three weddings and a fiaso: celebrities (and Peter and Jordan) get hitched" sniffed a headline on a round-up of the weekend's nuptials in Saturday's *Daily Mirror*, while in the next day's *Sunday Mirror* an editorial was even more scathing: "The whole pantomime was sold to a magazine for £1.75m. And on the stroke of midnight the whole lot turned back into overpaid, under-talented Z-list celebs."

Under-talented? Jordan appears to be exceptionally skilled in at least one thing: getting herself in the *Daily* and *Sunday Mirror*. In the past six months the pneumatic model has featured in more than 500 articles in the papers, including a three-day series of double-page spreads on "the REAL Jordan" by features editor Kevin O'Sullivan.

And while the paper insisted last week that the couple's wedding was bound to be both "tacky" and "chav-tastic", it was the only publication which bothered to clear an entire page for some thrilling "exclusive" photographs from inside the wedding venue – snapped surreptitiously the morning *after* everyone had gone home and the cleaners had moved in.

AT LAST, after a mere quarter of a century, someone at the *Spectator* has had the courage to tackle "the Taki problem".

In his column three weeks ago, the drunk ex-jailbird attacked some "rude slobs" who had the impudence to moor their "gin palace" next to Taki's boat. The slobs – whom he called "the stinkpot crowd" – apparently "looked as if they were in the music business". In the original version, he also drew attention to their colour. But, as Taki is now complaining furiously, "the word black was taken out in case someone's feathers were ruffled".

Needless to say, Boris Johnson can't claim the credit – he was in Uzbekistan at the time. The editorial excision was the work of his deputy, Stuart Reid.

HOW DID Roger Alton scoop the *GQ* Editor of the Year award last week, despite the fact that sales of the *Observer* have dropped year-on-year?

It surely couldn't have anything to do with the fact that *GQ* editor Dylan Jones is a good friend of Alton's, or that the *Obs* has regularly given Jones acres of publicity over the last 12 months.

On 17 July alone, it featured a glowing review of his pisspoor book *IPod Therefore I Am*; a 2,000 word article by Jones about the origins of the book; and a smaller piece in which he advised holiday-makers on the perfect summer iPod listening. Jones has also been commissioned to write for the *Observer*'s monthly food magazine and its Media Business section.

No wonder he thinks so highly of the Editor of the Year.

WHY DID no other British newspaper cover the holiday-hell story reported in the *Evening Standard* two weeks ago, under the headline "Airport Misery for BA Passengers"?

It was indeed a miserable tale, which surely deserved national attention and perhaps even an emergency recall of parliament: "Flight BA64 had been due to leave Nairobi at 10.45pm on Saturday for the eight-hour flight to London but the pilot reported a technical problem as the plane waited to take off. Engineers tried unsuccessfully to repair the fault and it was not until 4am that the passengers were allowed off. But then they had to wait two hours for their bags…"

And so the saga continued, in exhaustive detail, before concluding with a victim's verdict. "One angry passenger said: 'It was a shambles.'"

And who was this unnamed angry passenger? Step forward Ms Veronica Wadley, editor of the *Evening Standard*!

***OBSERVER* business editor Frank Kane had a most important front-page story last weekend – that BBC business editor Jeff "Essex Boy" Randall wants to return to print journalism.**

Randall's prospects of landing a plum job won't have been hampered by Kane's puff piece – sorry, news story. It revealed that Randall has been a "pioneering figure for more than four years" at the BBC, and is "regarded as a success in the high profile role".

Kane added that Randall "has not yet signed a deal with a newspaper, but there would be no lack of demand… Randall won the prestigious Sony radio award and the Wincott award for business broadcasting". No doubt it was only lack of space that prevented him listing Randall's O-level grades as well – and mentioning one other small fact. At the much-married Frank Kane's most recent wedding, the best man was… Jeff Randall.

Trebles all round for Kane and his drinking pal!

"A BELEAGUERED George Bush toured the devastated wastelands yesterday as his failure to get to grips with the tragedy posed the greatest crisis of his presidency," the *Daily Mail* reported on 3 September. "With New Orleans and dozens of towns crippled by floods and looting, the president was accused of failing to grasp the scale of the crisis."

The *Times* was equally trenchant: the response of the US authorities had been a "disastrous shambles" leaving "experts expressing bafflement over how the most anticipated natural disaster in US history brought such a slow and chaotic response".

How could they have got it so wrong? If only the White House had consulted the British press on the morning after the storm hit, it would have been left in no doubt as to its magnitude: as the *Times* reported on page 8 on 30 August: "NEW ORLEANS ESCAPES WORST BUT COUNTS THE COST OF STORM'S FURY" (an accompanying piece jocularly entitled "Katrina and the waves" detailed how the latest big wind compared with other record-breaking water surges).

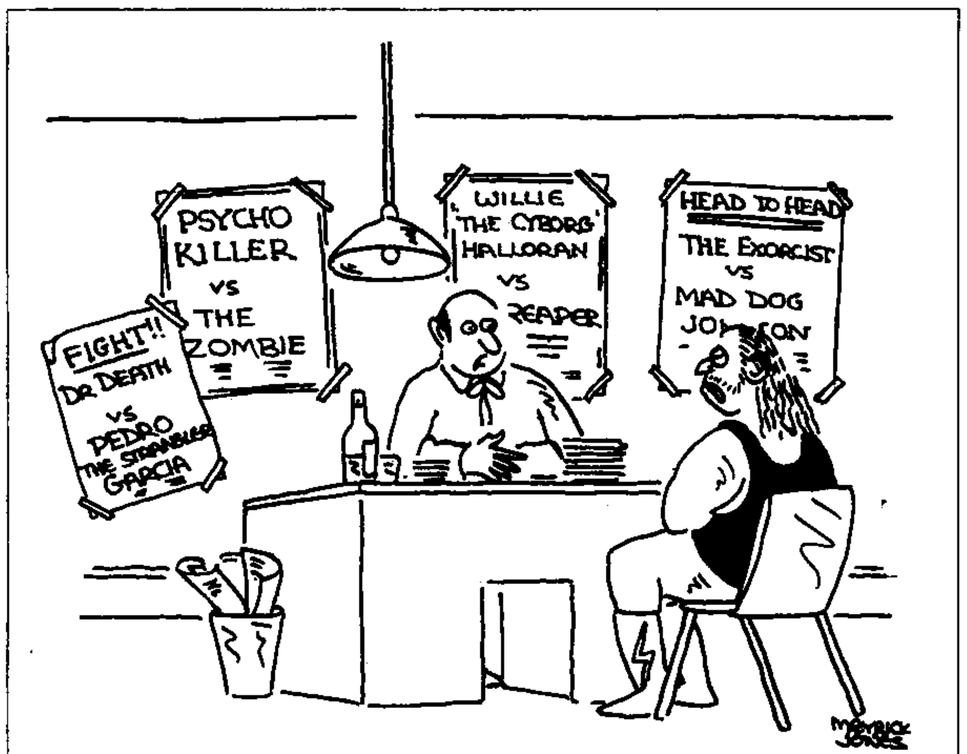
Over in the *Mail* things were even better – the paper waited until page 12 to spend a full 650 words pointing out that "it could have been far, far worse… there had been fears that New Orleans was facing calamity but initial indications last night were that the levees had remained largely unbreached", beneath the spectacularly inappropriate headline "PHEW ORLEANS!"

***SUNDAY Telegraph* executive editor Richard Ellis, invigorated by his recent romantic expedition to watch the cricket at Lord's with his colleague Jacqui Fuller at the height of production on a Friday, is back to what he does best: issuing stern memos to staff about their working practices.**

As Christmas falls on a Sunday this year and there will be no papers published, staff had been looking forward to a week's extra holiday. But the charmless Ellis has other ideas. Last week he sent a Scrooge-like missive telling hacks they would have to work up to Christmas Eve or take the week off as part of their annual leave. Unless, presumably, they're going to the cricket...

THE Dirty Digger has pulled off quite a coup in poaching Mike Anderson, managing director of the London *Evening Standard*, to take charge of the *Sun* and *News of the Screws*. Or so the nation's excitable media correspondents would have us believe. "His departure will be a blow… to Associated Newspapers," the *Grauniad* reported.

The *Guardian*, like many others, claimed that Anderson was "the brains behind *Metro*", the Associated freesheet. Not so: he arrived at *Metro* some months after its launch. He is also described as "the main driving force behind the *Standard Lite*, an idea the *Standard*'s editor,



"What sort of name is that? Henry the Navigator?"

Veronica Wadley, is understood to have initially resisted". This much is true – but far from the whole truth.

Anderson persuaded Associated Newspapers to launch *Standard Lite* by producing a dazzling array of advertising revenue projections which convinced the board it could pay its own way. But his temporary successor, veteran Fleet Street boxwallah Bert Hardy, is now going through the accounts – and, the *Eye* learns, has found "a £15m black hole". The projected revenues never materialised and one focus of Hardy's investigation is the amount of free advertising given away under Anderson's stewardship.

Anderson's "lavish McTavish" tendencies had alienated many colleagues even before the discovery of the black hole. Earlier this year he took a fortnight's freebie to watch the rugby internationals Down Under – a five-star, first-class junket worth about £35,000. Unwilling to use up two weeks of his holiday entitlement, he insisted that the trip was strictly business, "to cultivate contacts".

"WE LAY DIANA 'PLOTS' TO REST", shrieked the *News of the World* on 28 August over an "exclusive account by the princess's former bodyguard Kez Wingfield of Why Diana Really Died".

Wingfield's key points – that the last minute "idiotic change of plan" which led to Diana's death was made in a phone call between Dodi and Mohamed Fayed and could not have been anticipated by any would-be assassins, and that a visit by the couple to a potential "marital home" and the supposed "last words" of the princess were inventions by Fayed senior – are certainly true.

Wingfield outlined exactly the same story to journalist Martyn Gregory while he was making his Channel 4 documentary on the death of Diana back in June 1998; he repeated them at length and on the record for a book Gregory published the following year, and again in fellow bodyguard Trevor Rees-Jones's book *The Bodyguard's Story* in 2000.

But while we're on the subject, it is worth recalling how at least some of the "wild theories" that the *News of the World* claims to have finally put to rest originated. "There was no secret engagement between Diana and Dodi… they never went shopping for an engagement ring," the paper claimed last month, which must have come as a surprise to readers who recall the paper's front page splash on 19 March 2000 that "secret video footage" provided by a French jeweller "proves Princess Diana and Dodi Al Fayed were engaged to be married when they died".

Now, however, it is time for that theory – and presumably all the other "crucial leads UNINVESTIGATED, vital clues IGNORED" which the paper claimed to have exclusively revealed in November 2003 – to be forgotten so that we can, as the paper pleads, "let Diana rest in peace".

CONFERENCE SPECIAL

THE Social Market Foundation (SMF) has published its list of corporate-sponsored fringe meetings at the upcoming Labour party conference in Brighton – and it will be business as usual at a string of wine-and-policy meetings with ministers.

The **Mobile Operators Association** is paying for a meeting with **science minister Lord Sainsbury**, where its director Mike Dolan will join a platform discussion on health scares in the media. Buoyed by recent studies showing no link between mobile phones and cancer, the phone firms want government backing against planning objections to new mobile masts.

Mobile company **3** meanwhile is sponsoring a meeting with **culture secretary Tessa Jowell**, Burnley MP and former special adviser to Patricia Hewitt **Kitty Usher**, and **Roy Hattersley**.

Though the mobile phone firms are cuddling up to Labour, they aren't always so friendly. Collectively they currently have a claim working its way through the European courts demanding a £3bn VAT rebate from chancellor Gordon Brown for the "third generation" phone licences they bought from him. The other way they hope to recoup some of the cash they paid for the new "picture phone" licences is porn. For example, 3 sells its phones by advertising a "top shelf" service which includes "slide shows and videos from *Playboy*, *Mayfair*, *Escort*, *Men Only*, *Club International* and *Men's World*" on your handset (hands-free operation optional).

Elsewhere at conference, **transport minister Stephen Ladyman** and loyal MP **Peter Hendy** will address a meeting on Labour's transport policy called "Are we there yet?" The answer is: not if they have to rely on the meeting's sponsor, the **Go-Ahead Group**, for transport. It has the lowest satisfaction rating of any train operator and is so unpopular it is losing its Thameslink franchise. Its £290,000 a year chief executive Chris Moyes will be on the platform to explain the firm's miserable performance.

One of Britain's worst performing firms, the **British Nuclear Group** (the new name for BNFL), is paying for an invitation-only "think while you drink" party with a "covers" band and unnamed "special guest" hosted by **arts minister James Purnell**. It seems BNFL prefers spending cash on parties for Labour's in-crowd than on proper safety procedures.

Standard Life is also keen to rub shoulders with ministers. It is paying for two meetings: one with **pensions minister Stephen Timms** (at which its executives will discuss the question: "Is there a need for compulsory pensions?") and one with **treasury secretary John Healy** on "ethical business". Standard Life would certainly do well out of compulsory *pensions*, but it might find it easier to persuade the public if its "ethical" business did not include selling thousands of "endowment mortgages" that left homeowners with massive shortfalls.

Health secretary Patricia Hewitt will also address a meeting on "public service delivery". But she won't be appearing alongside a doctor or nurse. Instead she'll be accompanied on the platform by a partner from PriceWaterhouse-Coopers which is paying for the event.

AHEAD of the Labour party conference there are rumblings of discontent in the TUC following the Gate Gourmet Heathrow dispute.

The comrades are angry that a Labour government has been resisting an EU law called the "temporary workers directive" that would give temp workers the same rights as full timers.

Gate Gourmet's tactic of hiring strike-breaking agency workers, apparently on even lower rates than the strikers, would have been illegal had the UK accepted this EU regulation. Instead, the then trade secretary Patricia Hewitt battled against the regulation in 2003 with a "regulatory impact assessment". These papers show how new laws might affect business, and according to the DTI's calculation, the EU rule would have seen temp agencies and the businesses who use them shelling out an extra £598m a year.

This was calculated as a *loss* – although of course it would have been a gain for the temp workers themselves. Around 300,000 workers would have got a share of £366m. The government would also have got an extra £92m in tax and national insurance contributions. Bizarrely, however, these potential gains for the low paid and the exchequer were seen as reasons to *oppose* the new Euro law.

Hence Hewitt backed an Anglo-German deal whereby temp workers would only get equal pay after a year. This was a great wrecking wheeze, as temps, being temporary, do not usually get to work a whole year. With these and other tactics, Labour managed to keep the new "temps rights" at bay. No wonder the comrades are unhappy.

WHATEVER became of the grandly-named Project Endurance, announced by e-commerce minister Mike O'Brien at the CBI conference last November, to teach us how to avoid computer viruses, spyware and other internet nasties?

He promised £2m for an advertising blitz in spring 2005 to raise public awareness of online security issues. So widely was this decisive action publicised that it was even mentioned on the Microsoft Update site. A steering group was set up comprising the department of trade, the home office, the National Hi-tech Crime Unit, the Central Sponsor for Information Assurance, the National Infrastructure Security Co-ordination Centre, the CBI and banking industry group APACS. But there has been neither sight nor sound of what they've all been up to since.

A call to the DTI reveals that Project Endurance is still around, only now it's called Get Safe Online. It's also become rather less ambitious. A website is promised in October, built with £150,000 of sponsorship from eBay and banks offering online services, plus £150,000 from the cabinet office. Meanwhile it is still "hoped" to "attract further sponsors in a bid to fund a £2m advertising campaign".

WHAT is it with planning ministers and anti-mobile phone mast campaigns?

Back in *Eye* 1129 it was Keith Hill MP, then minister for planning, merrily campaigning against a giant mobile phone mast near a park in his Lambeth constituency – after spending months staunchly defending his department's unwillingness to tackle the feeble planning laws applying to masts.

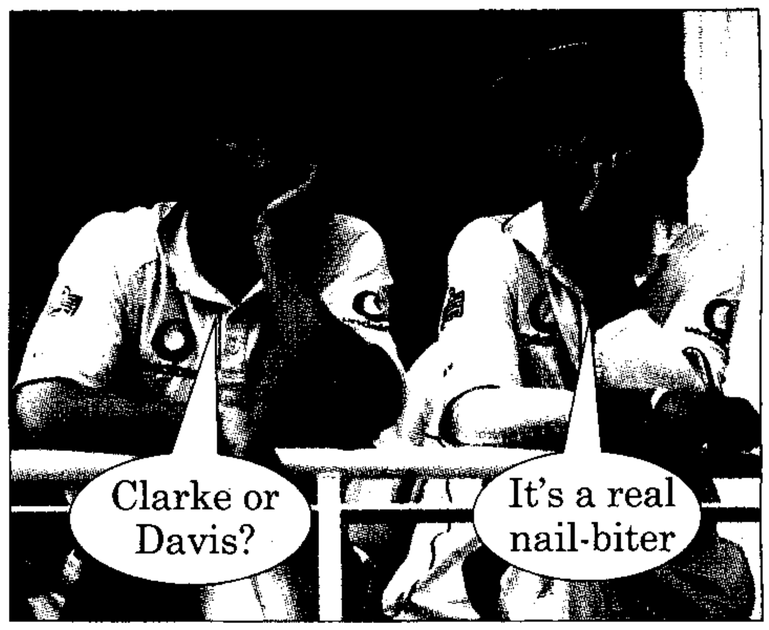
Now the current planning minister Yvette Cooper is tangling with Vodafone over plans for a 28ft mast on a housing estate in her Pontefract and Castleford constituency, where the company wanted to talk to objectors individually rather than face them at a public meeting.

Back in July she told the Commons that on the matter of mobile phone masts: "Parliament has given local planning authorities the responsibility for development control in their areas. The secretary of state does not seek to interfere with the jurisdiction of local planning authorities unless it is necessary to do so."

Yet there she was backing the 500 objectors to the mast, writing to Vodafone to insist on it consulting residents properly and telling the local press that she was "appalled" by the company's behaviour.

Cooper's department recently commissioned Arup to find out whether mobile phone companies are obeying the voluntary commitments they made to things like, er, public consultation meetings. Looks like she has her answer...

A NATION HOLDS ITS BREATH



ON 5 SEPTEMBER the government announced membership details of its eight "honours committees" that recommend knighthoods, OBEs and other baubles.

The appointments were apparently made via "open competition" to protect the "gold standard" of the honours system. And who could argue with the qualifications of Rob Margetts, who sits on both the "economy" and "science and technology" committees?

Margetts chairs Legal & General, having sat on its board since 1996. In 2003 L&G was fined more than £1m for mis-selling useless "endowment" mortgages. This year the fine was reduced on appeal to £575,000.

FORMER first minister of Scotland Henry McLeish has solved the dilemma of living on an ex-prime ministerial pension of £40,000 a year (after less than 12 months in the job) by signing on as a £700-a-day consultant at the PR firm of his former political rival, Ray Robertson.

Hardline right-winger Robertson's Halogen communications firm provides "reputation management" to clients including Sainsbury's Bank and William Hill Bookmakers.

McLeish quit the top job in Scotland after the public relations disaster that was the scandal over sub-lets at his constituency office.

Another former supposed Labour man who already has his nose in the Halogen trough is journalist Tim Luckhurst. Rentaquote Luckhurst has previously described McLeish as "a cynical machine-politician who compensates for his apparent lack of talent by nurturing ambitions for which he is unsuitable". So there'll be no tension in the Halogen office then...

WAY BACK in 1998 the government published a consultation paper on leasehold reform with a ministerial foreword that claimed the notion of leasehold "is totally unsuited to the society of the 20th, let alone the 21st century... The government believes the leasehold system is fundamentally flawed."

For the next few years, legislation to tackle the problem was drawn up, carefully scrutinised and passed by parliament. Last September the commencement order finally made the new commonhold tenure a reality.

But what is this? Last month's announcement of the details of the government's new HomeBuy scheme allowing people who can't afford a whole home to buy an equity share in one said: "Homes will be purchased on a leasehold or equity loan model. Our aim is to take the best elements of current legal models and move towards greater consistency."

CRICKET fans who missed morning play due to lengthy security checks throughout the Ashes series may feel rather more sympathetic towards the security staff and stewards on learning that they are being paid less than minimum wage or even sent home with no pay at all by contractors owned by business services giant the Carlisle Group.

Recruit Event Services plc provides casual staff for many top venues including Arsenal's Highbury Stadium and the cricket grounds at Lord's, Trent Bridge and the Oval.

According to the GMB union, staff are told to turn up at a venue two hours before gates open for events, but get no payment for waiting time. Many are then sent home if not needed, having wasted their time and bus fare. Even those who do get work only earn around £5.50 per hour. Once the pay is averaged over the unpaid waiting time, that often turns out to be less than the minimum wage.

The union reports that employees have been dismissed halfway through a job for absurd matters (such as having "too many pockets" or scuffed shoes) and sent home without payment. Payment for safety clothing and equipment such as torches has been deducted from pay.

The Carlisle Group (not to be confused with global investors the Carlyle Group) has a $1bn annual turnover, providing staff for contracted-out services including security and cleaning for local councils, public transport and schools.

HIGH PRINCIPALS

WHEN Plymouth University vice-chancellor Roland Levinsky reassured the people of Exmouth in 2002 that the local teacher training college would not be closed after merging with the university, he apparently meant that it wouldn't be closed *yet*.

At the time Levinsky wrote to Exmouth town council, describing Rolle as "a viable campus" with a role to play in the university's future. Three years later Plymouth is to "centralise" its Rolle College education faculty, abandoning the Exmouth site with its brand new £2.1m building and the numerous strong links with local schools and the community and moving everyone to Plymouth in 2008. Plymouth has already closed the historic Seale-Hayne agricultural college in Newton Abbot and moved those students into the city.

East Devon council bosses say the loss of the 4,000 students and 300 staff at Rolle will cost the small town's economy around £2m a year, seriously affecting the sustainability of many local businesses. The university now says there was "no timescale" on the commitment to stay in Exmouth.

OUTSOURCING SPECIAL

EVEN the Management Consultancies Association, which represents firms that make around £2bn a year from "outsourcing", has finally recognised the disadvantages of this costly racket.

According to the MCA think tank, one of the main causes of tension in the workplace is "outsourcing and the continual redefinition of what constitutes an organisation's core business" – exactly what management consultants are paid thousands of pounds a day to do.

Among the biggest outsourcing cock-ups of recent years occurred when Sainsbury's "outsourced" its IT systems to Accenture (formerly Andersen Consulting). Three years later the supermarket was forced to write off £140m on a logistics system that couldn't track stock properly, prompting a very annoyed chief executive, Justin King, to declare: "We will renegotiate our contract with Accenture because they can and should help us get systems where they need to be and because the current contract has been unable to do that."

Accenture's relationship with another outsourcing client demonstrates precisely the tensions identified by the MCA. Having taken over Thomas Cook's back office work, the firm has "offshored" much of it to India at the cost of 175 jobs without, in the staff union's view, consultation required under employment law. A tribunal will hear the case later this month.

Not that this has harmed Accenture's prospects. The National Health Service has signed the company up in a £1.1bn outsourcing deal as its "local service provider" for the north east for the next 10 years, while as a "premier partner" of the 2012 Olympic bid the consultants can expect a fair slice of the forthcoming bonanza.

Another outfit doing well out of the NHS's towering IT ambitions is Atos Origin, the company behind the "choose and book" fiasco for GPs that cost £140m more than it should have done (see *Eye* 1125) and is getting a fraction of the use intended for it.

"Choose and book" was one of the early projects in the IT programme now run by the trendily named "Connecting for Health" NHS agency run by former Deloitte man Richard Granger. He has just appointed a new chief technology officer, Paul Jones, who joins straight from… Atos Origin.

While the NHS IT programme is scheduled to come in at around £6bn, many experts predict that costs will eventually approach £30bn. With such enormous amounts of public money at stake, the most competent and trustworthy oversight of the programme is essential and might have been expected to remain firmly in the government's hands. But management of the project has itself been outsourced to 35 people employed by a firm that knows all about spending billions in public funds: Halliburton subsidiary Kellogg, Brown & Root.

KBR is under investigation for ripping-off the US government over its work in Iraq and appalling controls on expenditure, and for paying bribes to win oil contracts in Nigeria. Just the firm to keep tabs on the likes of Atos and Accenture.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

WHEN is a gift not a gift? When it's a free holiday, it seems, taken by the family of EU president Jose Manuel Barroso on board the yacht of a Greek billionaire chum whose company is applying for a 10 million euro grant from the EU.

Though more light has now been shed on Barroso's controversial stay on the gin palace of Spiros Latsis last summer, the result is less than illuminating thanks to the difficulty the EU seems to have in defining the word "gift".

According to the parliamentary answer given to the Danish clean-up MEP Jens-Peter Bonde (who asked "Are trips gifts?"), since "no trips have been notified in the register [*of the European Commission's protocol department for gifts whose value exceed 150 euros*], it's the end of story." In other words, if the gift of a free trip isn't registered, er, it's not a gift.

This seems at odds with the commission's own rule book which suggests that trips *are* gifts. It clearly states: "The principles and rules governing the acceptance of gifts by Members of the Commission in the exercise of their duties, irrespective of the form such gifts may take – including, in principle, non-tangible gifts such as trips unrelated to the performance of their duties – are laid down in the Code of Conduct for Members of the Commission."

Barroso dismissed allegations of misconduct over his free holiday with Latsis as "absurd" and "gutter politics". But as Nigel Farage, the UK Euro-sceptic MEP, pointed out, Lamda Shipyard, a Latsis company, had applied for a 10 million euro grant from the European Commission months before the Barroso holiday; and negotiations were taking place between the firm, the EU and the Greek government shortly before the Barroso family boarded the Latis yacht.

DESPITE criticism of the European Commission by the EU ombudsman over its treatment of German investigative journalist Hans-Martin Tillack (Eyes passim ad nauseam), the commission is still hanging on to papers seized from Mr Tillack in a police raid early last year and has just promoted an official with links to the case.

On the instructions of the EU's inept fraud-busting department Olaf, armed police descended on Mr Tillack's Brussels flat after he had written a string of (accurate) exposés of EU chicanery.

By May this year the EU communications commissioner Margot Wallström was conceding to journalists that the commission might have to consider what lessons needed to be learned from the case. But so far the commission doesn't seem to have learnt anything.

As the Dutch MEP Paul van Buitenen has made clear in a written parliamentary question, Nicholas Ilett, a director at Olaf, had, according to the ombudsman, "misled Mr Tillack by wrongly claiming… that Olaf did not store any personal data on Mr Tillack."

Even though this was clearly "incorrect", as the ombudsman said, Illett has now been punished with, er, promotion.

EU-phemisms

It will keep me in this highly-paid job for years

We have no idea where your money is. Get over it

TV

Tsunami - Naming The Dead (BBC2)

The Man Who Predicted 9/11 (Channel 4)

Raising The World's First Killer Submarine (Five)

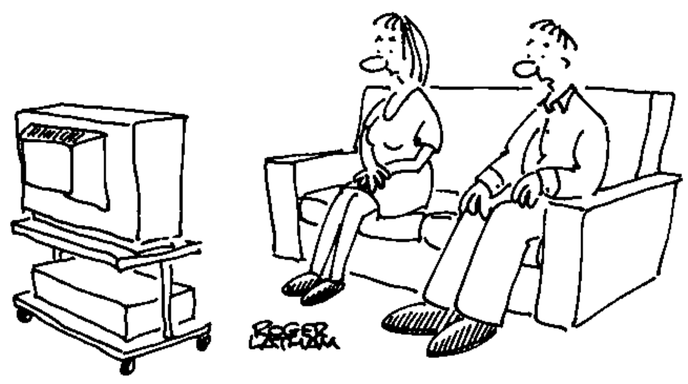
THE social convention that the dead are remembered with a minute or two of silence has long been ignored by television where memorials to those slain in wars and atrocities consist of hours and hours of talking.

So, because it's four years since Osama bin Laden terrorised America, here's a new slew of shows on Channel 4 about what happened, including one with the come-and-get-me title **The Man Who Predicted 9/11**. And, because enough time has passed since the tsunami not to seem to be cruelly exploiting the grief of the bereaved, here comes a killer-wave retrospective: **Tsunami – Naming The Dead**.

It may say something terrible about the modern mind, or at least producers' views of it, that these catastrophe flashbacks always seem to be looking for tactics to grab our attention again, as if we might be bored with all these old corpses. Their main strategy is "human interest", as if any decent human would not already be sufficiently moved by what happened in those towers and at those coastal towns.

For example, the tsunami documentary was made by the veteran BBC science series Horizon and is mainly a film about the forensic detection methods used to identify the bodies lost in the flood. So there's lots of gruesome detail about skin slippage and unstable internal gases at a level to make *CSI* or the novels of Patricia Cornwell and Kathy Reichs look like exercises in Austenite irony.

But, just in case we're finding all this stuff too dense and technical, there are long sections putting a biography to the names. Though intended to soften the documentary, these sequences actually make it harder to take because we keep connecting the body parts and skin samples being discussed with an actual person with grieving relatives, when no sensible person would want to watch an autopsy of someone they knew. Cold clinical anonymity might have been better but "human interest" is assumed to attract more viewers.



"Any idea what we were watching before the ads came on?"

The other problem with this approach is that it becomes a sort of covert sentimentality, as if the fact that these cool systematic people are identifying the drowned is something good to come out of the disaster: that dreadful American pop psychology idea of "closure."

You feel that tug too in the Channel 4 film. *The Man Who Predicted 9/11* is, in effect, an attempt to tell a heart-warming and optimistic story about the mass-murder in Manhattan and Pennsylvania. Rick Rescorla, a Cornish lad who emigrated to America and fought in Vietnam, became boss of security for Morgan Stanley in the WTC and obsessed for a decade on the possibility that terrorists might attack the towers from the sky. He even simulated the attack on his computer aviation game. So, when the day came, almost all of Morgan Stanley's staff were evacuated according to Rescorla's plan, except for six, including Rick.

This is a good yarn, though widely covered in popular US magazines at the time; but there's something worrying about its oddly upbeat focus: like those Hollywood movies in which the Apollo 13 disaster and the Vietnam War are somehow turned into triumphs. Wouldn't journalism be better occupied trying to find out how much the Bush administration really knew about the 9/11 conspiracy? Or, on the other story, what is happening in the tsunami towns now?

The biggest worry, though, is that, like atrocity itself, anniversary programmes escalate. Horizon was just cannily getting ahead of the huge pack of one-year-on tsunami docs which will hit the schedules in December. And imagine how many 9/11 films there will be next September when the time elapsed reaches five years: an anniversary number that, as with Diana in 2002, traditionally justifies a really big fuss.

And, if you want the really bad news, it's that your descendants may be watching repackaged stuff about the twin towers and the Asian wave in 2146 on whatever Venusian mind-insertion ray television has become by then.

Because, apparently worried that there isn't enough catastrophe programming in the real world, Five last week went back to 1864 for its forensic flashback. **Raising The World's First Killer Submarine: Shipwreck Salvage** – how ugly titles are becoming in the multichannel struggle to get viewers' attention! – reconstructed the downing of the Confederate vessel CSS Hunley by the Union ship Housitanic. Dramatic restagings intercut with forensic archaeologists and divers trying to find out what went wrong.

Polls show that fewer and fewer people believe in an afterlife but who needs a heaven when the tragically dead go to television on a permanent loop?

'Remote Controller'

MEDIA NEWS

DESPITE BBC News's blanket coverage of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, current affairs executives decided to send more than a dozen extra production crew to put together a one-hour special, *Hurricane Katrina: The Real Story*, fronted by "Gorgeous" George Allegiah.

Masses of location footage was shot and the team then travelled to the BBC's Washington studios to edit it. But where were the pictures? While the team was heading back to Washington, someone sent them directly to London, leaving *Real Story* with no option but to borrow footage from ABC News, re-editing it as best they could.

To add insult to cock-up, the Washington studios were already fully booked dealing with the corporation's other Katrina coverage, so the *Real Story* team had to go outside the BBC to find an edit suite. "We might as well have made the programme in Brussels," said one furious producer.

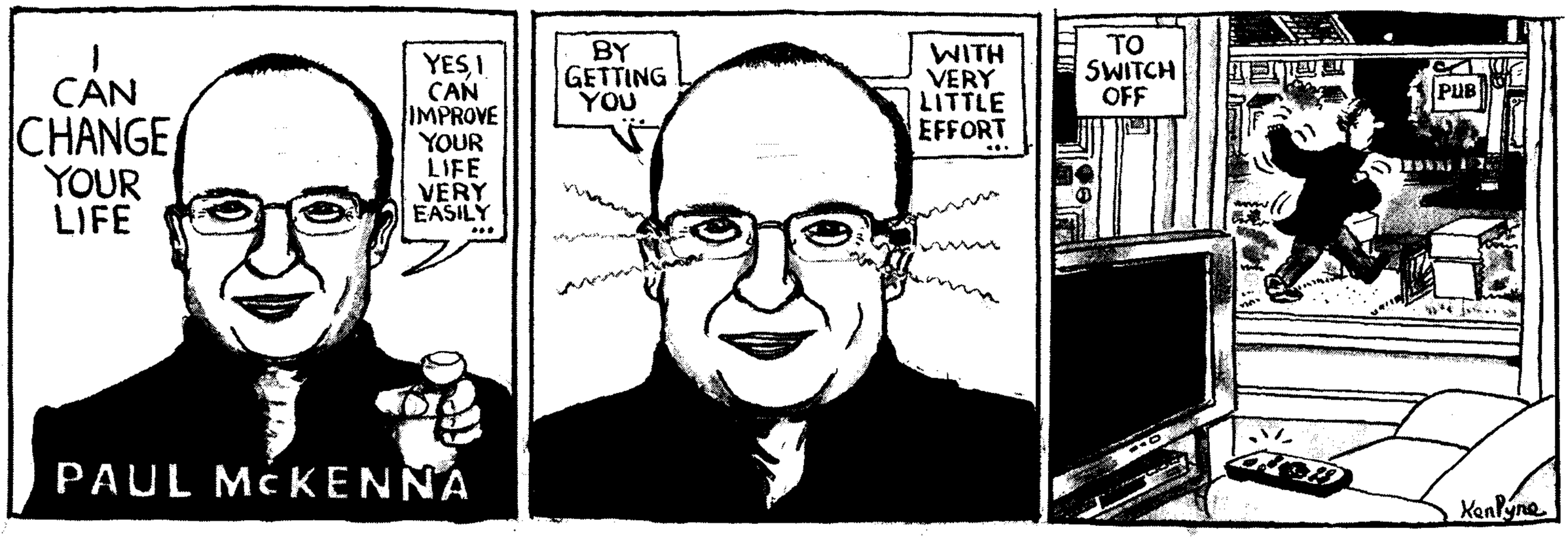
NO ONE is more assiduous when it comes to the protection of copyright than Rupert Murdoch, whose Fox and Sky networks are the source of several of the globe's most pirated television programmes.

News Corporation takes an active role in the Federation Against Copyright Theft (FACT), cracks down mercilessly on landlords who dare to broadcast football matches in their pubs without stumping up for a premium Sky subscription, and ensures that fierce "Our Lawyers Are Watching" warnings are slapped across the most minor splashes in the *News of the World*.

The intellectual property laws, however, appear to apply only in one direction. Ten days after the *Times*'s spectacularly pathetic John Humphrys story, the paper's website was still offering visitors the opportunity to view a streaming video of his three-month-old speech, the copyright of which belongs neither to it, nor to Tim Allan, the spineless shyster who acquired it for them, but to Richmond Events, the company which organised the event at which Humphrys appeared, and whose chief executive Mark Rayner has already described the leaking of the video to the paper as "totally underhand and dishonest".

SO delighted is Sky One with its new series of wildlife documentaries *Final Chance to Save* that it flagged the programme as one of its "monthly highlights", with much proud talk of "teams of experts highlighting the potential extinction of some of the world's most famous species".

Less impressed is Sky's listings department, which clearly believes viewers will only cease their channel hopping for celebrities rather than cute critters. The black rhinos of Kenya were ruthlessly excised from the electronic programme guide for the first episode in favour of what appeared to be a rather uncharitable dig at the state of the guest presenter's career: "*Final Chance to Save*... Griff Rhys Jones".



I - S K Y

"I realise that last night was a Tuesday and that the programme was not actually on, but I am the only journalist in the western world yet to express a view about *Lost*, so please indulge me for a moment. Haven't seen much of it really. I'm much more of a fan of USA Network's *The 4400* instead (returning to Sky One soon)."

– Hannah Betts, "Last Night's Terrestrial TV" column, the *Times*.

"Can *Deadwood* (Sky One, Mondays, 10pm) get any darker or better? I don't think there's anything better on TV right now."

– Lorraine Kelly, the *Sun*.

"You heard me, stranger. I said ponchos are like so totally last year"

RUNNERS & RIDERS

ON SUNDAY 18 September, BBC1 viewers will get four solid hours of live coverage of the Great North Run, the world's biggest half-marathon. In the commentary box, as usual, will be Brendan Foster, the former Olympic athlete who is now a wealthy businessman.

"Presenters, reporters and production staff should have no substantial connection with products and firms featured in the stories they are covering," according to BBC guidelines. Yet the chairman and controlling shareholder of the company that promotes the race, and sells the broadcast rights to the BBC, happens to be Brendan Foster. Shome mishtake, shurely?

Another slight mystery concerns the Great North Run Charity, a trust which was set up by Foster in 1986. The idea was that some of the surplus income from the race would be passed on to the charity by Foster's company and then dished out as grants to sporting and artistic groups in the north-east. By 1987/8 it had funds totalling £143,326.

According to the Charity Commission, however, these have long since dwindled to almost nil. Foster's company has paid nothing into the charity for 18 years, and no grant has been made since 1996. Last year (and the year before) the Great North Run Charity had income of £6 – interest on the tiny sum left in its bank account – and expenditure of, er, zero. Why hasn't it been put out of its misery?

CLIVE ANDERSON's new *Guardian Sport Show* on Channel 4 (featured in the last *Eye*) isn't the only beneficiary of Ofcom's recent relaxation in the rules on TV sponsorship.

The bookmaker Totesport, aka the Tote, is now looking for a marketing agency which can help "develop its brand presence on television" when the company takes over sponsorship of Channel 4 racing on 1 January 2006.

Earlier this year Channel 4 threatened to drop the gee-gees from its schedules altogether unless the racing industry paid it £10m a year. After months of bluff and double-bluff, no deal was agreed and it looked as if racing would be lost to terrestrial TV altogether except for the handful of races covered by the BBC.

But then Ofcom decided to "liberalise" its regulations so sponsors had more chance to "get their brand message across". The Tote agreed, at the eleventh hour, to put up £3m a year, along with another million or so from its partners – the racecourse owners.

C4 executives have been enjoying trebles all round at Soho House ever since, congratulating themselves on forcing a major sport to finance the televising of its events. The racing industry used to be paid by Channel 4 for the TV rights: now it's precisely the other way round.

What do the sponsors get in return? One of the Tote's big campaigns is to promote a particular Tote bet called the Scoop 6. This already receives at least a dozen plugs a week on the current Channel 4 racing programme, and it will be interesting to watch just how far it dares push it in January when the Tote starts paying, officially, for the plugs. Even under the new, laidback Ofcom rules, "product placement" is still banned. On the other hand, they do allow sponsors far more leeway in promoting a brand's "values and attributes". Whether the Scoop 6 is a product or merely an attribute remains to be seen.

DUMB BRITAIN

Steve Wright's Big Quiz, Radio 2

Wright: Which month of the year is named after the Roman god of war?

Contestant: Thursday.

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: Finish this well known rhyme: "Ding dong bell, pussy's in the..."

Contestant: Kitchen.

AR: Complete this three-word phrase meaning "haphazard": "hit and..."

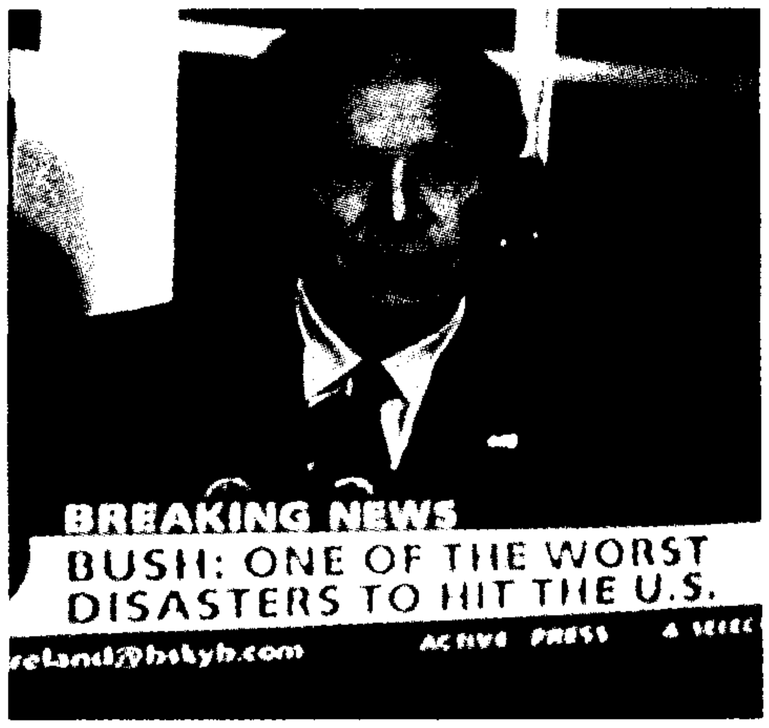
Contestant: Run.

Ken Bruce's Popmaster quiz, Radio 2

Bruce: Listen to this piece of music [Sex Crime by the Eurythmics] and tell me the name of the movie it featured in, made from a famous George Orwell novel.

Contestant: Was it 1989, Ken?

I-SPY *Sky News* (submitted by everyone)



POPEYE

IN THE last *Eye* we noted the enthusiasm of the *Daily Telegraph*'s city pages for Monstermob, the mobile phone content company in which the paper's peculiar proprietors the Barclay twins own a 5.5 percent stake.

One *Eye* reader who was impressed by the paper's promise that the company "deals less in the kind of ringtones that drive you mad and more in real music", contacted us to point out that Monstermob actually does nothing of the sort: each "Full Track" download the company offers at the princely sum of £4.50 comes with the following small print attached: "Full Tracks are not original recordings and are not sung by original artists. They are not connected with the artist or associated companies in any way" – in other words, they are the 21st century equivalent of those *Top of the Pops* albums with the girls in bikinis on the front.

By comparison, Apple's iPod, which last week launched its own mobile phone version, offers downloads of genuine songs for just 79p – not that this stopped the *Guardian* from printing an equally enthusiastic puff-piece on 6 September beneath the headline "Monstermob Jukebox prepares to blow iPod out of the water".

AD NAUSEAM

AN OVERSEAS graduate student at Cambridge University asks her supervisor for help in setting up a British bank account. So he takes her to the Cambridge branch of – you guessed it – HSBC, all too aware of its blanket advertising campaign as The World's Local Bank.

Despite having all the correct paperwork, they were told that it would be very difficult to set up an account, bearing in mind the student's place of origin. The student in question's place of origin was, er, Shanghai, the same as that of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation.

Number crunching

4 ■ Number of TV programmes Piers Morgan has now fronted about the pointlessness of celebrities

4 ■ Channel which has commissioned them, thus turning Piers Morgan into a pointless celebrity

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

DOING THE ROUNDS

Non-sexy illnesses No 94: Blackouts

AROUND 30 percent of patients diagnosed with epilepsy actually suffer from a disturbed heart rhythm (arrhythmia), which leads to a temporary loss of consciousness resembling a seizure.

Some patients suffer many such attacks of "reflex syncope" in a short space of time, which is very debilitating and distressing, and yet many go for years without the correct diagnosis or treatment. The lucky few who are diagnosed can be very effectively treated with a pacemaker.

A consultant cardiologist and *Eye* reader describes one such patient who was misdiagnosed with temporal lobe epilepsy for 27 years. She suffered sever bouts of depression and avoided socialising for fear of having an attack. She had to reduce her working week to 18 hours, was unable to swim alone and received very little help from the NHS. "Despite her appalling suffering she experienced off-hand treatment at the hands of unmotivated clinicians hiding within a dysfunctional and unresponsive system. Her local neurologist laughed at her, the cardiologist wouldn't deign to see her, and the local commissioner wouldn't agree to her having a pacemaker in London.

"In desperation she came to me in my private rooms (her GP having refused to refer her to my NHS clinic). I did not charge her. I asked her husband to leave the room, told her to feign a blackout, admitted her to my NHS hospital and put in a pacemaker that afternoon. Since that time she has got a completely new life, with work, friends, exercise and new confidence."

The consultant, who wishes to remain anonymous, believes the outlook for patients with unsexy illnesses that aren't targeted or given extra resources remains poor. Just 450 people per million receive pacemakers in the UK for the treatment of slow heart rhythms, compared to an average of 900 in western Europe. Similarly, only 45 UK patients per million receive implantable cardioverter defibrillators to protect them from sudden cardiac arrest compared to 85 in western Europe. France, Germany and Italy have five times as many electro-physiologists (heart rate specialists) as the UK.

The top-down, centrist NHS will never be able to treat patients according to clinical need while resources are so unevenly distributed and patients have very little clout in seeking out the treatment they need. Those suffering from recurrent blackouts would be well advised to visit the Syncope Trust and Reflex Anoxic Seizures website (www.stars.org.uk).

Liam Fox MP will formally launch his bid for the leadership of the Conservative Party on Thursday morning, 8 September at the Hillside Clubhouse, 1 Hilldrop Road (corner with Camden Road), London N7 0JE.

Hillside House exists to help people with a history of mental health problems to develop their social, vocational and living skills.

Press Release

Number crunching

£140m

- Amount by which NHS 'choose and book' computer system came in over budget
- Total NHS overspend last year

THE £68m indebted Surrey and Sussex healthcare trust *(Eyes passim)* has been forced to make draconian cuts.

Three operating theatres and a ward have been closed; and all elective surgery, save cancer and life/limb threatening conditions, has been cancelled. Some surgeons will be left with no operating sessions at all; many staff are planning to leave and the future of Crawley hospital looks very bleak. Patients will apparently be shunted elsewhere "around the health economy" to ensure that they aren't "disadvantaged" or – more to the point – that they don't breach waiting targets that would punish the trust even further.

SOUTHAMPTON University NHS Trust has decided *not* to dismantle its cardiac liaison team after a publicity campaign started by the *Eye* (1138).

However, the issue of inadequate resourcing of child heart services remains as pertinent as ever.

M.D.

off your trolley

REEVE & WAY

ACCORDING TO THE PATIENT'S CHARTER I'M SUPPOSED TO SEE A DOCTOR WITHIN 4 HOURS...
IT IS NOW 3 HOURS 59 MINUTES 45 SECONDS. WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?
SEE THAT MAN OVER THERE...
THAT'S A DOCTOR, NOW YOU'VE SEEN ONE
CLINIC
NIC

SIGNAL FAILURES

AFTER legal action that took years of costly preparation and seven months in the Old Bailey, the main finding of guilt in relation to the Hatfield rail crash has landed on Network Rail – which didn't even exist at the time.

Four people died in the accident in 2000 after a defective rail stayed unrepaired for 21 months. The derailment triggered months of chaos unprecedented even in wartime because Railtrack had no idea where another rail could break. All the individuals charged over the accident have been cleared; prosecutors had no hope of finding the requisite "directing mind" in such a shambolic system.

Balfour Beatty, a former Railtrack contractor, has admitted safety failings, but the problems clearly ran much deeper. It's impossible to regard Network Rail as the real villain because NR was formed two years *after* Hatfield, and quickly began correcting the worst failings of its Railtrack predecessor.

Hatfield had an unusually clear cause. Major rail accidents normally involve a complex combination of factors. The finger of blame for the 1999 Paddington crash was pointed mainly at the train driver who had passed a red signal, but there were also issues over driver training and safety mismanagement on the tracks leading from Paddington station. By contrast, the Hatfield derailment was simply down to Railtrack's maintenance regime.

Many people played a part in that regime, starting with the Tory ministers and civil servants who stubbornly refused to listen to experts' warnings that a private, profit-driven track owner could not be trusted to police safety on the entire network. Even Tory MPs were worried, so the government with its slim majority ensured there was no mention of Railtrack privatisation in the 1993 rail sell-off legislation – only to privatise Railtrack soon afterwards.

Various directors at Failtrack undermined the company's control of safety by sacking experienced engineers, promoting patch and mend, abandoning or reducing routines for prevention or detection of track faults, and handing almost total freedom to maintenance contractors and their motley assortment of subcontractors. Accidents and near misses, many of them reported in the *Eye*, exposed the flaws in Railtrack's management, yet Railtrack's shareholders didn't replace the directors or force changes of policy.

Now Network Rail awaits a probable fine, which would mean punishment for Hatfield being paid by the taxpayers who bankroll NR – not the private investors who entrusted their cash to Railtrack. What was it the Tories said about rail privatisation transferring financial risk from the public to the private sector?

'Dr. B. Ching'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

TOWER OF PR

ORGANISING the PR operation for Labour-run Tower Hamlets – one of Britain's most deprived boroughs – has proved a real money-spinner for some well placed individuals and companies.

Two years ago *Eye* 1087 revealed that the council had employed PR consultant Lorraine Langham to deal with awkward questions arising from a Scotland Yard investigation into the alleged misuse of millions of pounds of public money. Langham was paid the equivalent of an annual salary of £130,000. She was a partner in consultancy firm Renaissance, which was set up in 1997 by Tony O'Regan, who had just stepped down as chief of, er, Tower Hamlets PR department.

In 2004 Renaissance was shortlisted for the one-year contract running Tower Hamlets PR department. Renaissance pulled out when the firm's close links with the council were revealed and attracted unwelcome publicity.

Earlier this year Renaissance merged with another company called 20-20 and formed Verve Communications. For the last few years 20-20 had also enjoyed close links with Tower Hamlets, organising events and conferences on behalf of the council. Verve's managing director is none other than Lorraine Langham, while Tony O'Regan is a director. In July this year, with the PR contract up for grabs again, Tower Hamlets announced that Verve Communications had won it. Langham will head the operation, assisted by one Donald Neame, whose CV helpfully includes the fact that he, too, once worked for Tower Hamlets PR department.

LOVED-UP

RELATIONS between the ever-vigilant Mendip council and the Glastonbury festival's organisers have, historically, been rather fractious.

In 2002, for example, unsuccessful would-be gatecrashers vandalised the town, to which councillors responded by rejecting the original licence application for the following year.

Recently, however, a disarming bonhomie has characterised dealings between them. To take one good deed, Melvyn Benn, the festival licence holder, kindly passed a pair of this year's FA cup final tickets to Mendip environmental health officer Chris Malcolmson, who reports annually on the suitability of the festival's licence application.

Benn could have made a fortune – touts were asking £2,000 for a pair of tickets – but he sold them to Malcolmson for the stub price of £180. What a gent.

KAFKA COUNTRY

ONE OF the Standards Board for England's more surreal current "investigations" concerns one Bob Pont, of Chesterfield, Derbyshire.

Mr Pont is not a local councillor. He sits as a lay member of the Newbold and Brockwell community forum, a sort of sounding box which passes on people's views on local issues to Chesterfield borough council. He can vote to express his opinion on something, but not to make a decision – only elected councillors can do that. The forum has a small budget from the council which can be used for low-scale local improvements – benches, shelters, skateboard ramps, etc.

At a meeting in October last year, a group of forum members wanted to recommend that part of the budget be spent on play equipment for a local primary school where some of them were PTA members. As a school governor (at another school), Mr Pont pointed out that this wouldn't be legal as the equipment wouldn't be available for the use of all children in the area. Providing equipment for a specific school was the responsibility of the local education authority – in this case Derbyshire county council.

A bad-tempered discussion ensued and one of the PTA members burst into tears, at which Mr Pont told her: "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen". He says he regrets this and has apologised. Nevertheless he was accused of "bullying" and has been under "investigation" by the SBE for 10 months, even though he is not an elected councillor. Kafka would be proud.

TROUBLED WATERS

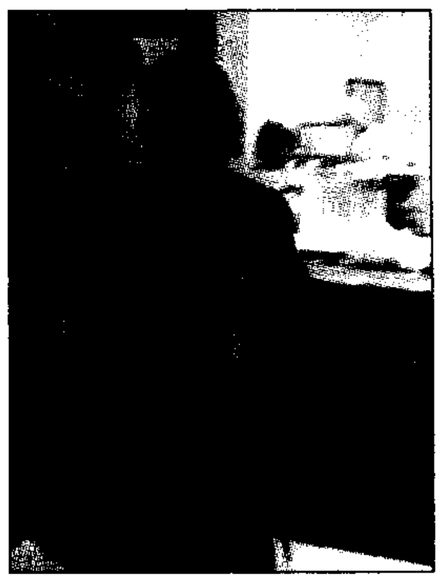
DESPITE overwhelming local opposition the executive committee of Teignbridge district council has ratified the planning committee's controversial decision to allow the building of a trimaran and visitors' centre on land known as The Den, which in 1869 was set aside for public use as a "garden or pleasure ground" in perpetuity (*Eye* 1135).

Approval for the venture, prior to "adventurer" Simon Chalk's attempt to sail solo round the world in a £1.3m trimaran, *Spirit of Teignmouth*, was granted by seven votes to one.

The decision to overturn the covenant protecting The Den was puzzling given local opinion. Before the executive committee meeting, a local shop had been collecting signatures from those in favour of the scheme. After three weeks 160 people had signed. In contrast, town councillor Susan Dawe collected almost 1,000 signatures against the plan in just four hours one Saturday morning.

Those Teignmouth town councillors who oppose building on The Den – and who had successfully argued at the August executive meeting of the district council that approval should be withheld at least until a business plan was drawn up – were incensed to learn just days before the decision that the hastily cobbled-together business plan doubled the length of the project from nine to 18 months.

A group of town councillors called a special meeting on Friday 2 September, three days before the district council executive committee was due to meet. But when they arrived at the council offices for the meeting they found the doors locked. Four councillors turned up, enough for a quorum, so they decided to hold the meeting in a nearby field. A fifth councillor arrived late, but unfortunately went to the wrong field. Back in Field One they voted four-nil against the scheme. When the town clerk David Tickell – who is in favour of the Trimaran project – was asked why the council offices had been locked he explained that he had been away on holiday and that there must have been a breakdown in communication. The previous night, however, two local societies had had no problem getting in for meetings. They do things differently in Devon.



● PUBLICITY-SHY Cllr Philip Waltham, Lib-Dem cabinet member "for Better Health and Safer Communities" on South Norfolk district council, approaches freelance cameraman and Green Party agent John Chapman at the Norfolk county council election count in May. As Cllr Waltham did not appear to have Mr Chapman's "better health" uppermost in his mind and was shouting "You're not going to take my photograph, you bastard!" Mr Chapman retreated but kept snapping until, he claims, he was forced over a table by the irate councillor, who was then led away by a colleague. Mr Chapman, who was actually trying to photograph someone else entirely, has unsportingly reported Cllr Waltham to the standards board.

EDUCASHUN NEWZ

THE BIG privatisation lie – that the private finance initiative gets things built on time – has been well and truly exposed at a clutch of schools in Scotland.

A couple of years back, the then education secretary Charles Clarke pointed to the privatisation of Scottish schools as proof that the PFI "delivers better value for money, helping to ensure that projects are delivered on time and on budget by transferring risk away from the public sector to the private sector".

Oh yeah? In Clackmannanshire, Dundee, Midlothian, Perth, Kinross and South Ayrshire, local councils have now all had to put back the announcement of PFI bids as they struggle over tenders and contract negotiations with private companies who are desperate to shoe-horn as much profit into their school deals as possible. The *Scotsman* calculated that the delays amounted to 17 months but that figure is still rising.

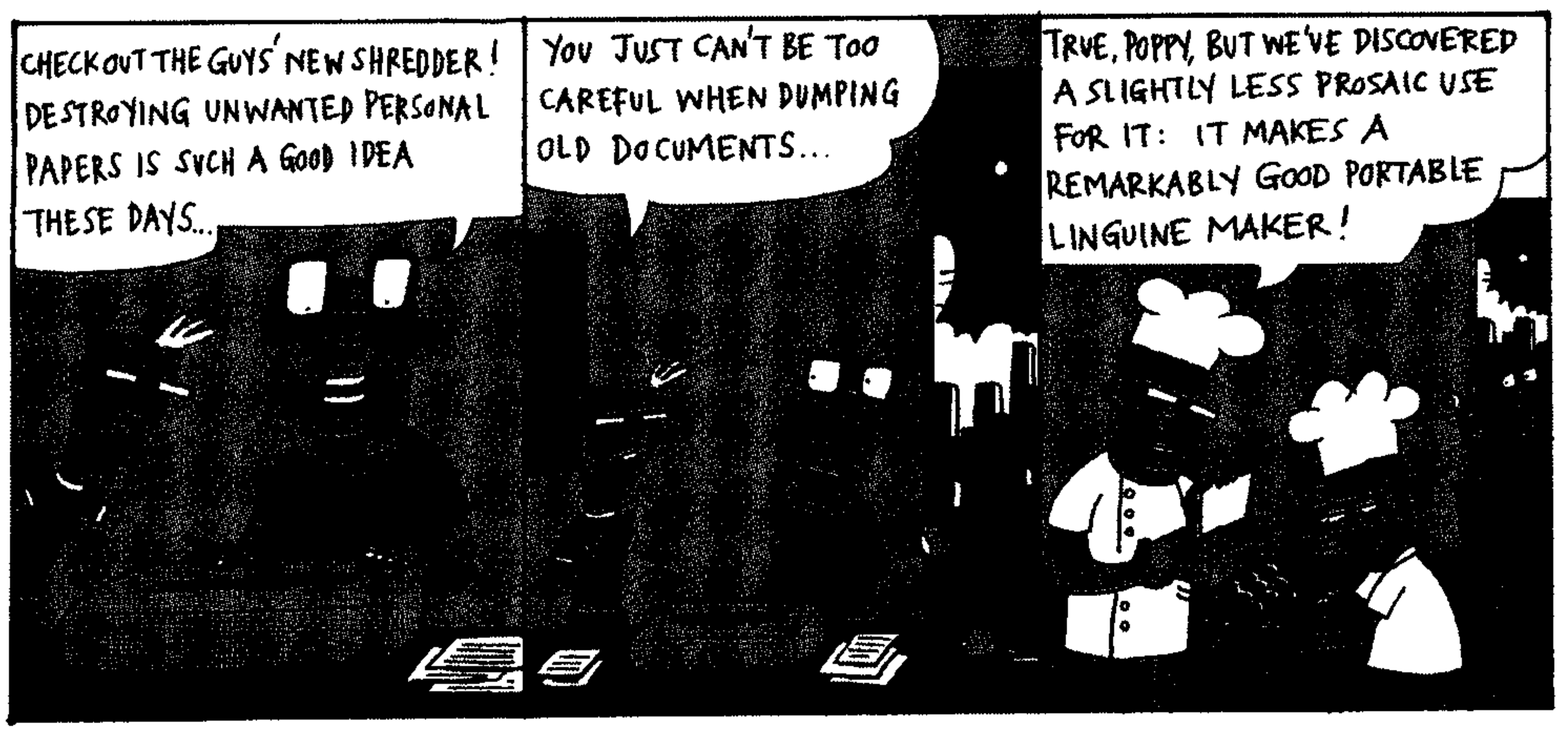
In Edinburgh, meanwhile, a £180m PFI scheme to rebuild six primary and two secondary schools faces a likely delay of at least a year because of a corruption scandal. A consortium of Balfour Beatty and Innisfree was on the verge of winning the contract when the consortium admitted it had received inside information on the bidding from a senior council official.

The discovery by Balfour Beatty's own auditors of the inside information led to the company's withdrawal from the contract, a police investigation, the sacking of one of the council's top officials and of course continuing delays in rebuilding the schools.

Dumfries and Galloway council could be forgiven for looking on the Edinburgh scandal with envy, however. It has spent just under £1m and four years trying to put together a PFI deal for its own schools but drummed up no interest at all. Dispersed rural schools just aren't as attractive to private consortia, it seems, as those in city centres.

Despite this the Scottish Executive insists PFI is the only game in town. So Dumfries & Galloway council isn't allowed simply to hire builders to fix its schools or use not-for-profit methods. Instead it must continue the long and fruitless search for a PFI consortium.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER


CHECK OUT THE GUYS' NEW SHREDDER! DESTROYING UNWANTED PERSONAL PAPERS IS SUCH A GOOD IDEA THESE DAYS...
YOU JUST CAN'T BE TOO CAREFUL WHEN DUMPING OLD DOCUMENTS...
TRUE, POPPY, BUT WE'VE DISCOVERED A SLIGHTLY LESS PROSAIC USE FOR IT: IT MAKES A REMARKABLY GOOD PORTABLE LINGUINE MAKER!

NOOKS and CORNERS

SINCE 1933, first two, then three and finally four great concrete column-like chimneys have risen above Battersea Power Station to create a distinctive and memorable landmark in the centre of London.

Without those chimneys, the huge brick walls of the electricity power station would form merely an ungainly bulk – despite Sir Giles Gilbert Scott's skill in dramatising them with his "jazz modern" fluting. With them, Battersea soon became one of the most admired examples of modern architecture in Britain.

Following closure, it was listed in 1981 in the first batch of inter-war buildings to be protected after Sir Nigel Broackes wickedly tore down the Art Deco Firestone Factory in anticipation of listing. But Battersea Power Station is now a problem, as it has been ever since the silly project by Mrs Thatcher's groupie, John Broome, to convert it into a giant fun palace foundered with his bankruptcy – leaving a derelict shell, with one length of upper wall demolished.

In 1993, the Battersea Power Station site was acquired by Parkview International, a property development company with interests in China (*Eyes passim*). Since then, various ambitious schemes to restore the building and develop the surrounding land using big-name modern architects have been floated (and enthusiastically supported by Wandsworth council), yet nothing has ever happened and the giant ruin has just continued to decay.

In 2004 the World Monuments Fund put it on its watch list of the world's 100 most endangered sites. Now – surprise, surprise – Parkview, which continues to insist that building work really is just about to start, has announced that the reinforced concrete chimneys must be demolished and replaced by replicas as they cannot be repaired *in situ* and must have a life of at least 60 years. Although this claim has been accepted by English Heritage, Parkview's opinion has been challenged in a specialist alternative report, commissioned by the WMF and the Twentieth Century Society, which argues that there is not a serious problem with the concrete and the existing chimneys can be stabilised.

But, given the recent history of the building and the site, what guarantee is there that if the chimneys are demolished they will ever rise again? It will be very difficult for English Heritage to impose legal sanctions on a company registered in the Virgin Islands, and Battersea Power Station without its chimneys will be a pointless hulk which might as well be demolished away – leaving Parkview with the cleared site which, the Battersea Power Station Community Group has long insisted, it has wanted all along.

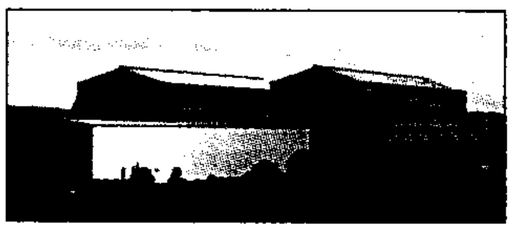
Perhaps the answer is for Parkview only to be granted listed building consent for demolishing the chimneys one by one, so it cannot remove the second chimney until the first is fully replaced, and so on. If Parkview really is serious about restoring Battersea, surely it can have no objection to this. London needs those chimneys.

ANOTHER great 20th century landmark is the pair of airship sheds at Cardington in Bedfordshire. More than 800ft long and 157ft high – that's almost twice the height of King's College Chapel – they dominate the flat, boring landscape south of Bedford, which the late, great Ian Nairn (who was born there and whose father, an airship draughtsman, lived at Cardington) described as "the most characterless county town in England".

The sheds are listed, at grade II*, and were first planned by Short Brothers in 1916. They accommodated both Barnes Wallis's successful R.100 airship and the hopeless R.101. It was from Cardington that the R.101 set off on its last, disastrous flight, in 1930 which ended in a field at Beauvais; the victims are buried in the village. Since then, with the consequent collapse of the British airship industry, these vast metal structures have effectively been redundant, although they have been used for odd things like storing weather balloons.

***The RAF left Cardington in 1999 and in 2004 Frontier Estates proposed building a huge distribution warehouse immediately in front of the two airship sheds. This met with massive opposition so, er, Frontier Estates has now submitted a planning application for a slightly smaller warehouse. Although 9ft lower than the first proposal, this structure will still be 50ft high and cover 33 acres. As even the environmental impact assessment report commissioned by the developers admits, the new warehouse will "Permanently and adversely affect the high quality landscape setting of the airship sheds as well as the sensitive agricultural open character in this area." Quite* (see illustration).**

The "Stop the Blot" (on the landscape) campaign is urging Bedford borough council to refuse planning permission, despite the usual bait of local job creation. Nor does the opposition only come from local residents, as many others interested in Cardington and in airship history are also objecting. Now it might be argued that the distribution warehouse is just another big shed joining two other big sheds, and what's in a shed? But the new one is just boring and banal compared with the remarkable listed airship structures. The impact of these two vast and unchallenged historic structures in the landscape is extraordinary and unforgettable. It is also now unique, as Barnes Wallis's big hangars at Howden and other former airship sheds in Britain are long gone. So yes: Stop The Blot.



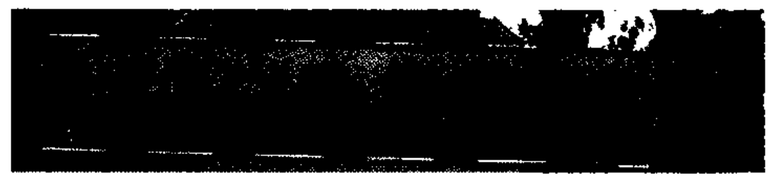
'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

Huge, overblown and ludicrously expensive. Perfect for Damien's work!
PROPERTY
HIRST BUYS CRUMBLING GOTHIC MANSION FOR MUSEUM
Er...

I-SPY



Dole, France **(Submitted by Alex McKechan)**

£10 paid for similar submissions.
(SAE required for return of photographs)

Cricket-balls

"Bombs, the weather, cricket and the new mood of consumer caution conspired to provide Britain's shops and stores with another grim month's trading in August, the British Retail Consortium reports today." – ***Guardian***.

"The resurgence in England's fortune started at about the same time the *Sun* started its Putting the Great Back Into Britain campaign. The England team have risen magnificently to the challenge." – ***Letter in the Sun.***

"Arise Matthew Hoggard and Ashley Giles – you're both obviously made of the same stuff as Nelson and Churchill." – ***Letter in the Sun.***

"Cricket is the new rock 'n' roll." – ***Hugh Cornwell (of the Stranglers), Radio 4***.

"When David English tells you that cricket is the new rock 'n' roll you can't dismiss the claim as an over-the-top cliché. He is, after all, the man who managed the Bee Gees…" – ***Sunday Mirror.***

"Cricket is the new football." – ***Henry Blofeld, Radio 4.***

"Is cricket the new football?" – ***Derek Pringle, Daily Telegraph.***

"Suddenly cricket is the new football." – ***Sun***.

"Is cricket the new football?" – ***Angus Fraser, Independent.***

"If cricket is the new football, then sport is the new light entertainment." – ***Sue Mott, Daily Telegraph.***

"I will remember the summer of 2005 for three things – splitting up with my boyfriend, the London bombings – and finding cricket… I am happy to discuss the finer points of Simon Jones's bowling action with you, really I am. But you should know that I am also a bit in love with him. Steph, meanwhile, is nursing a crush on Michael Vaughan. 'As captain of the cricket team, he has to be Sven-Goran Eriksson and David Beckham in one – the brains and the brawn,' she sighs. And here, I think, we come to the real reason why women like cricket: the players seem so nice… And a quick look at the sensibly pretty cricketers' wives (no, sorry, just doesn't have the same ring to it) allows you to daydream that they might, just possibly, in another dimension, want to marry you (all due respect to the present Mrs Vaughan)." – ***Joanne O'Connor, Observer.***

"FWOOAR." – ***Headline on a two-page "girl's guide to cricket" by English women's captain Clare Connor, the Sun.***

"The terms you need to know. *Batsman:* the person with the bat in their hand… *Maiden:* not us lovely ladies out there, but when no runs are scored from an over. *Run:* this is when the batsmen run between those two sets of wooden posts at either end." – ***From Clare Connor's guide to cricket, the Sun.***

"He's actually Welsh and his poorly ankle threatens to keep him out of action next week. But with a 6ft 4in body like this, we're just glad to have him at the ground… Envy the physio who gets to massage [Simon] Jones's legs for a week in the hope of getting him even fitter." – ***Clare Connor's guide to the England team, Sun.***

"Inspired by Flintoff and co, the Tories' 'big beast' wrongfooted his rivals by entering the leadership race last week." – ***Observer report on Kenneth Clarke's decision to go for the Tory leadership.***

Letters

Cricket balls

Sir,

Just a few comments on Remote Controller's piece about the cricket. The coverage on Channel 4 is excellent (apart from the horribly fragrant Mark Nicholas), but Channel 4 clearly doesn't care about cricket. We're forced to watch the racing on Saturdays, and highlights are too short and on at silly times at night.

Their desperation (along with other TV stations worldwide) not to upset their schedules has changed the playing conditions of Tests, with 10.30 starts and overs lost at the end of the day (a rule that probably stopped England winning the Old Trafford Test this summer). On top of this, their bid for the upcoming rights was worth LESS per Test match than what they currently pay. It is only now, when they realise they will miss out on large audiences that they claim to have any interest in the sport.

Sky, on the other hand, show extensive primetime highlights, make the effort to show England one-day games, tours (without Sky some of England's best Tests over the last few years would not have been broadcast), county cricket, women's cricket and games from around the world (like West Indies v Pakistan this year).

With the dedicated sport channels, they can cope with late finishes, and have offered a far larger amount of money for the rights. Imagine the England team being rewarded for their performances this summer with a pay cut and less funding for coaching - what would have happened had 4's bid been accepted.

It is a shame that terrestrial-only viewers miss out (but this hasn't damaged football's popularity), that we'll have to put up with Bob Willis, and that we'll have to give money to Murdoch, but given the bids the option to give the rights to Sky was, unfortunately, the only sensible one.

Anyway, remember the slogan of the summer and "Make Ponting History".

Keep up the good work,
STEVE HILL,

Via email.

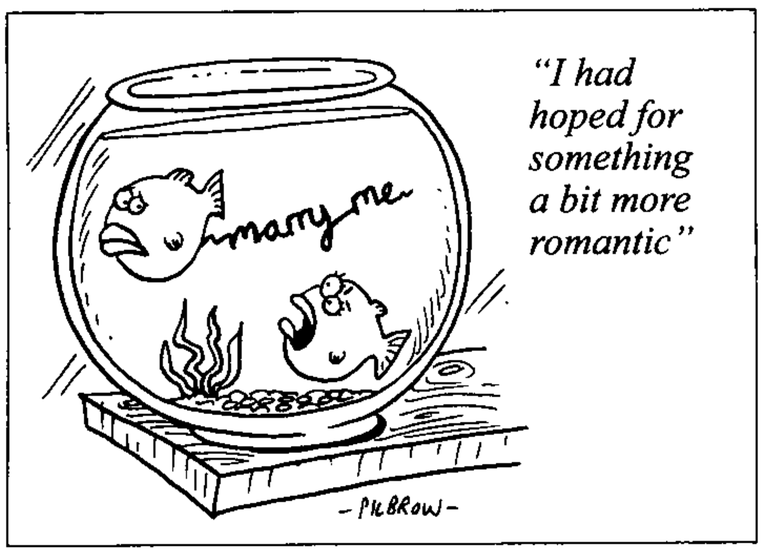
Five go mad...

Sir,

Tempted as I am to keep quiet and let Remote Controller's blood pressure continue to soar to dangerously high levels I'm afraid his fears regarding Five's cricket highlight's (Eye 1140) are without foundation.

For viewers who don't have Sky we will be delivering high production value coverage in a prime-time slot designed to enable fans coming home from work to catch up on the day's play. Hopefully Remote Controller will still be around next summer to enjoy our highlights programme and won't have completely dissolved into a pool of misguided indignation.

Yours,
ROBERT CHARLES,
Controller of Sport, Five.



"I had hoped for something a bit more romantic"

Vital statistics

Sir,

Re: Doing the rounds (Eye 1140). This was an appropriate title for M.D's last article if ever there was one. It bears an uncanny resemblance to an item aired on Radio 4's You & Yours programme back in the spring.

With regards to the argument about how robust industry-sponsored clinical trials are compared to publicly-funded research, they are both equally open to bias. An independent researcher is just as likely to get the result they are looking for as the pharmaceutical companies are, because that's the way trials are designed and statistical analysis is conducted. Nobody is going to fund research based on the principle of proving oneself wrong.

The essence of good research is that the results should be repeatable, which is more likely to occur in large trials with rigidly defined endpoints than in small observational studies. You ought to know that, because the thousands of column inches you have dedicated to the MMR story are based on one such small study which nobody has been able to replicate.

Consequently, those who would say that your argument has no substance are winning, despite the anecdotal evidence that there is a risk attached to MMR. The only problem is that anecdotal evidence is not acceptable because it is not sufficiently robust. Who would want their doctor to prescribe them a drug based on hearsay? For myself, I'd rather they made their decisions after consideration of the available evidence.

As a final point, I know that the teaching of statistics at medical schools is risible, but if M.D. is suggesting that his colleagues are so thick that they'd be hoodwinked by the sort of industry tactics he is suggesting, they'd be within their rights to lynch him.

Some good ideas, though. Perhaps he should apply for a job with a drug company.

Must go. I have to read a clinical paper.

JONATHAN ORMEROD,

Via email.

Healthy scepticism

Sir,

M.D. dissects out well some of the links between medical journals and pharmaceutical industry trials, but another major issue is that many trials never appear anywhere – especially those that the industry does not like. This matters to patients because it gives the impression that drugs are much more effective than they actually are.

There is a movement to set this right that started with an international drive to register all trials. With a new journal, PloS Clinical Trials, the Public Library of Science, a not for profit publisher that aims to make all research available to all, including patients, for free, will provide a place to publish these unreported trials. Neither this journal nor PLoS Medicine take advertisements from drug companies. It is possible for medical journals to break their unhealthy dependence on the wishes of the pharmaceutical industry.

GINNY BARBOUR,
Public Library of Science.

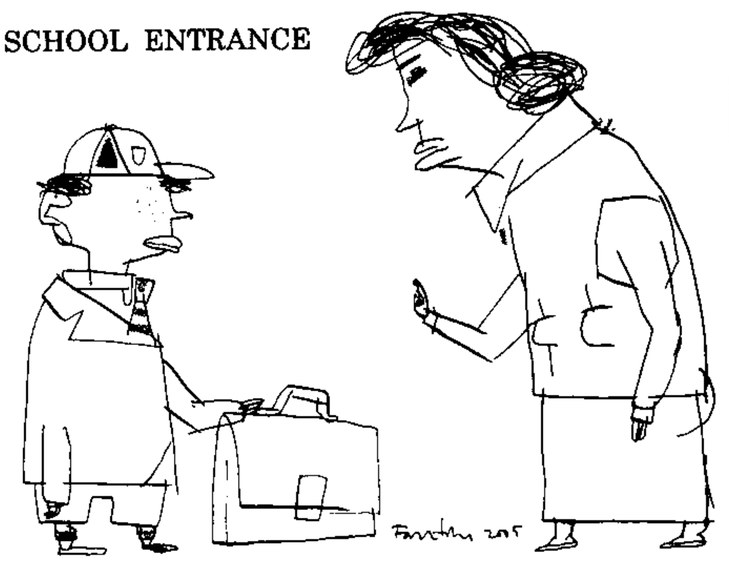
Green wing

Sir,

As M.D. reports (1140), the BMJ doesn't publish a disclaimer with its advertisements. Because Google ads appearing on bmj.com are cordoned off in their own green-tinged box, under the heading "Ads by Goooooogle", we figure that people know what they're getting. We can delete dodgy ads when spotted by ourselves or our readers, as explained on our Feedback page. To date we've done that over 50 times.

TONY DELAMOTHE,
Web editor, BMJ.

Scenes You Seldom See



"I'll park right at the end of the street because mummy doesn't want to block the road when she picks you up"

Ageist

Sir,

Your reference [Eye 1140] to Cllr Myers-Hewitt's age is irrelevant, unless one takes the view that the elderly are intrinsically more racist than youthful journalists, which is a rather bigoted and ageist view in itself.

Isn't it just possible that the councillor was in fact misheard. If people take the view that it goes without saying that ageing Tories are all racists, it follows that the same people will be more than a little inclined to hear what they want and expect to hear, as you yourselves perhaps exemplify.

Yours etc,
S. SHARPLES,

Torpoint, Cornwall.

Classical ruins

Sir,

Alasdair Livingstone was indeed "talking rubbish" and seems to be as unfamiliar with stones and glass houses as he is with Arabic (Eye 1139). In a great British tradition, he clothes his ignorance with Classical terminology (albeit not incorrectly used). Firstly, commonsense might lead him to suspect that the feminine plural ending (-at) refers to things not people, otherwise his "informers" would have to be exclusively female. Secondly, a nodding acquaintance with the Arab world or a glance at a dictionary would inform him that the Arabic for "secret police" is 3rd form passive (not his 2nd form active), so the correct form is mukhabarat (with the 2nd and 4th vowels long). The word is also the "Intelligence" part of the Arabic for the CIA. A friend of mine had a particularly nice encounter with the mukhabarat in a country neighbouring Iraq in which she was "encouraged" to admit that all western women are whores. She later learnt that she had been taken in for questioning as a result of having rejected the advances of a university professor.

Yours,
JULIAN FAULTLESS,

Via email.

Dress sense

Sir,

Re Ad Nauseam 1140. I'm not surprised Marks and Spencer have had to abandon their advertising campaign featuring a size 17 model – such models must be hard to come by, there being no such thing as a UK women's dress size 17. If M&S had used a size 16 or size 18 model (or indeed any model whose dress size conforms to the even-numbered norm), then they might have had a bit more luck.

Yours assuming that Eye-wives receive perfume for Christmas,
NICOLA COFFIELD,

Glasgow.

Gunning for Piloti

Sir,

Piloti's article on the Arsenal move from Highbury to Ashburton Grove in issue 1139 is pathetic. It reveals once again that the people who run Private Eye are ex-public school twits (snobs about football), happy to distort the truth (associating the Emirates Stadium with governments rather than an award-winning airline), and lefties who would make Marx proud (it's immoral to do something for profit).

Arsenal have always struggled to compete financially because of the limited crowd capacity at Highbury. Although the company is listed on the AIM market the majority of shares are owned by the directors and other true supporters of the club. The sums (including sponsorship) had to add up or the project could not proceed. You imply that local interests and the normal planning system were ignored. In fact, negotiations have taken years to come to fruition. Over 2,500 legal documents were signed in order to give the project full clearance. Over 2,000 new homes will be built in Islington as part of the project (you mention only 711), and at its peak 1,000 construction workers will be working on the new stadium. The project is on time and on budget, unlike the "National" stadium down the road at Wembley. Over 25,000 cubic metres of contamination has been removed from all the sites.

You complain that the flats replacing the North & South stands will be the same height as the listed East Stand. This means they will blend in better with the listed building. Would you rather the East Stand hadn't been listed so they could knock it down and build all the houses as low-rise?

BOB MACLEAN,

Horsham.

Village voice

Sir,

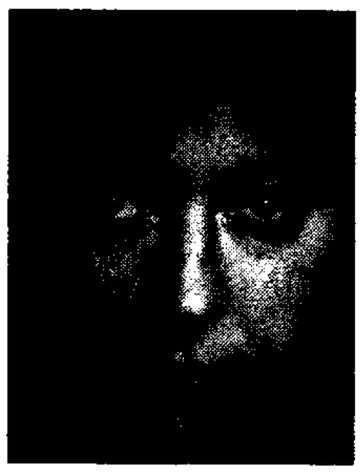
Unlike Dafydd's village, there was indeed only one gay in the Village People (Hunter cartoon, Eye 1140). However, it wasn't the biker as suggested, but in fact the cowboy who was "the only gay in (that) village".

I knew this information would come in useful one day.

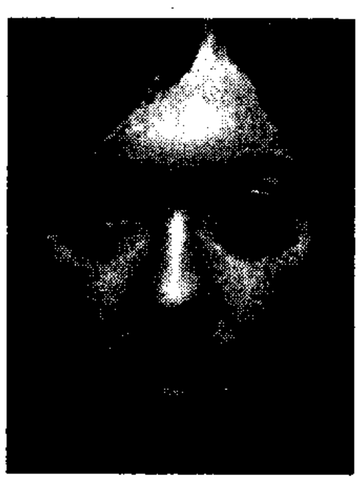
Regards,
RICHARD ALLEN,

Via email.

Lookalike



Antony



Julie

Sir,

Are raucous brunette Antony, of the Mercury Music Prize combo Antony & The Johnsons, and raucous print brunette Julie Burchill of, er, any organ that will pay her, related by any chance?

Yours etc.
TOM CHURCHILL,

Glasgow.

"Actually, that's a bit shorter than I had in mind"

Spaghetti junction

Sir,

Re: The good, the bad, the ugly. Tell Thribb that as any fule no Morricone's Il Buono Il Brutto Il Cattivo (Titoli) doesn't go: Da di dah/Wah-wah-wah. It goes: Woo-ee-oo-ee-oo... Wah-wah-wah.

TIM WILKINSON,

Via email.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Shane Warne turned around like a can of beans."
MICHAEL ATHERTON, Channel 4
(C. Skelton)

"Harmison posthumously puts out a foot..."
Commentator, Radio 4
(Nick Faulkner)

"In this day and age you don't see too many footballers with two feet."
PETER ALLEN, Radio 5 Live
(Ben Hurst)

"We don't set ourselves sights, but we know what we've got to aim for."
PAUL ROBINSON, Channel 5
(Lesley Wallace)

"... they [Newcastle FC supporters] see Owen as some kind of Masonic personality."
Radio 5 Live
(John Taylor)

SOLUTIONS

"Pinnacle Chauffeurs: a one stop transport solution provider" – *taxis*

"Here at RAC we have a vision to become the UK's first choice for motoring and vehicle solutions" – *breakdown trucks*

"Aquatec's range of Qwik-Clip attachment solutions are designed to satisfy all your attachment requirements" – *clips*

"Canape Solutions" – *catering*

"Watermark is a travel sector solutions company" – *sick bag manufacturers*

"Linda Horler, Solutions Manager, Yorkshire Water" – *sewage boss*

All submitted by readers

Fast and loose

Sir,

Sorry to be pedestrian but Neil Thomson's diatribe against speeding motorists would have been more effective had the facts been right. The last time I asked, the Dept of Transport told me that, at the most, "inappropriate speed" is a "significant factor" in only about a third of all road accidents. Apart from a third being somewhat less than the whole, inappropriate speed means bad driving, and has nothing to do with exceeding speed limits.

Yours,
ROGER TAYLOR,

Meols, Wirral.

Original sin

Sir,

As an avid Eye reader, I am always amazed at the apparent level of conspiracy in public affairs but being a realist, wonder if my colleagues in the public sector are really up to it! Now that my own organisation has featured in your August Journal (in one of the August editions!!), I have concrete evidence that life is not always as Machiavellian as your excellent journalism suggests.

Down on the Farm implies that the missing document came to light as a result of an FOI request. The reality is that we did not have the original document and the FOI request that revealed it was to the council.

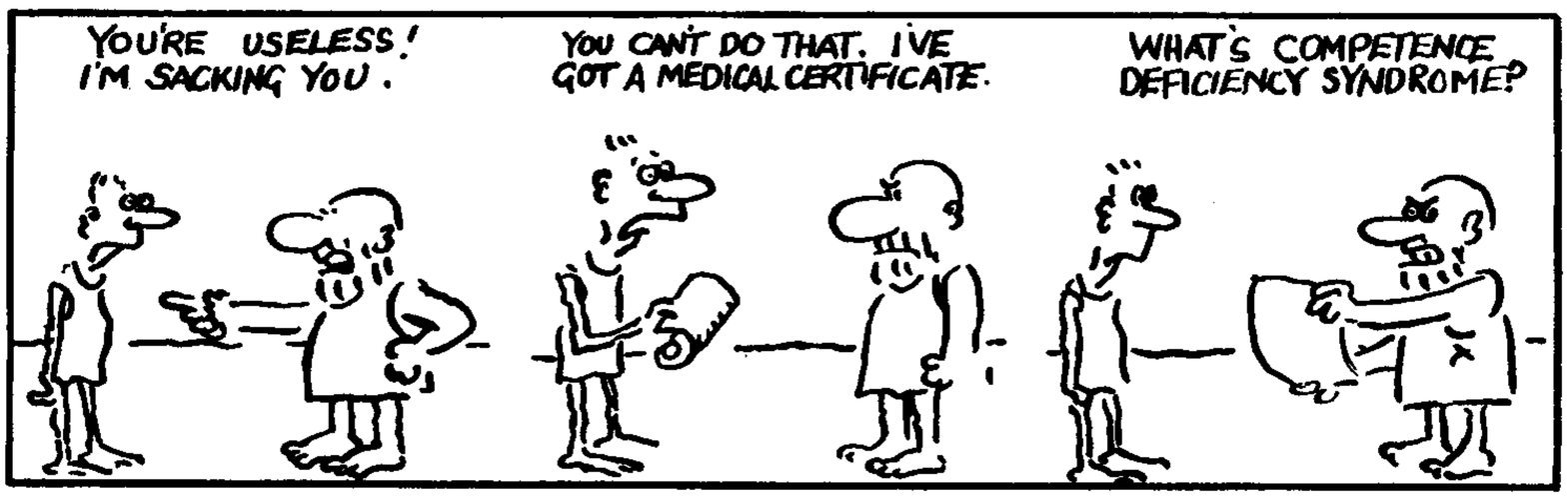
A case of poor administration for which I have already apologised to Mr Campbell in March 2004.

Yours faithfully,
NICK LEWIS,

Director of Corporate Services, South West of England Regional Development Agency.

HOM SAP

AUSTIN



LUVVIES

"I felt the P was getting between me and my fans and now we're closer."

SEAN COMBS (formerly P. Diddy, formerly Puff Daddy) explains his latest name change (to Diddy), *Mail on Sunday*

Submitted by Nigel Pearson.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Letter from **Canberra**

from Our Own Correspondent

STALWART in defence of the coalition of the willing, these days we are more likely to see our prime minister John Winston Howard on television hob-nobbing with his Iraq war mates George W. Bush and your own Dear Leader than here at home in Australia.

After sweeping to power in 1996, the Sydney lawyer first showed his mettle on the international stage by opting to support independence for East Timor, irrespective of the cost to relations with Indonesia, our oil- and gas-producing closest neighbour and the world's most populous Islamic nation.

Well, almost the closest; certainly the most powerful. The *nearest* country to Australia's northern coastline is actually the mostly Christian Papua New Guinea. The eastern half of PNG used to be our colony until independence in 1975; the resource-rich western part, once an outpost of the Dutch East Indies, had already been formally annexed by Indonesia's generals under the deeply fraudulent 1969 Act of Free Choice.

Jakarta sought to deflate secessionist sentiment four years ago by devolving new powers and renaming the province Papua. But the indigenous Melanesian people are making their own ever louder calls for full independence.

It is all starting to look like a second East Timor. Except this time the oppressed locals do not enjoy the support of Mr Howard's freedom-loving government. Foreign minister Alexander Downer is looking to tie up an agreement with Indonesia explicitly stating that each side will respect the other's territorial integrity. That's a polite way of saying we will not support any more secessionist movements over there.

Things would have to be pretty bad in Papua to persuade the locals that independence is the best way forward, given what a hash of things their brothers have made in crime-ridden and impoverished, aid-dependent PNG. And indeed they are. In April the umbrella body representing indigenous people from all over the province accused the Indonesians of genocide, ethnic cleansing and massive corruption. In May two independence activists received 10 and 15-year prison sentences for the heinous act of… waving a separatist flag. A Sydney university report last month, instantly dismissed by Jakarta, concluded that "a culture of impunity exists… armed forces act as a law unto themselves with no real accountability for crimes against the Papuan population".

Our government rejects parallels with East Timor, where the population voted massively in favour of independence. Things are indeed less clear-cut in Papua. That is partly because of the fear and intimidation provoked by heavily-armed regular troops and government-sponsored militias. It is also because of the mass-immigration to the province by Muslims from other parts of Indonesia. It's only a matter of time before indigenous Papuans are outnumbered in their own land. Indonesia's president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, like the country's military rulers before him, is not going to let slip a province that has gold, minerals, oil and natural gas.

Australia's timidity is matched by our comrades-in-arms in the struggle for a better Iraq. President Bush this month announced the resumption of the sale of vehicles, communications equipment and other non-lethal military items, although the embargo on weapons' purchases remains. But for the killing of two American teachers in the province in 2002, such a move might have happened much sooner. The EU, enthusiastically prompted by Britain, lifted its sanctions five years ago.

Journalists, aid workers and activists are not easily allowed into the province. Even when reports of abuses and graphic images of mutilated corpses do trickle out, the mainstream media is not interested. This makes it fairly easy for Mr Howard, so forthright over East Timor and Iraq, to ignore. But the problem will not go away.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

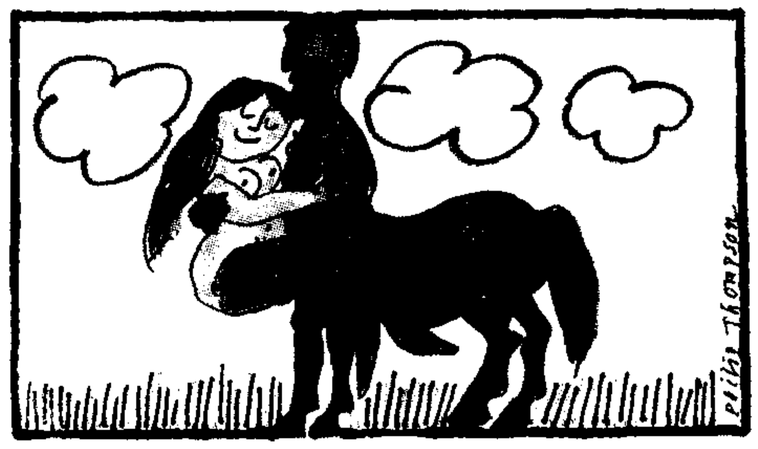
● "You have been found guilty of theft," a judge told Ms Albena Mihajlova in a Sofia courtroom, "and by rights you should be sentenced to three years in jail. However, it has been brought to the court's attention that you were a man when this case began, that you underwent a full sex change while on bail awaiting trial, and that you have now been living as a woman for several months. Under Bulgarian law, this means you are no longer the same person who was originally charged with theft, and despite the clear evidence of your guilt, the authorities are therefore left with no option but to drop all charges against you."

Later, Ms Mihajlova (formerly known as Mr Sretko Ickov) gave an interview to Bulgarian television in her home town of Dragor. "I felt unhappy as a man ever since my aunt gave me a transgender Barbie doll as a present for my tenth birthday, and I think my stealing was a manifestation of that unhappiness. While I was on bail, I confided to my solicitor that I was thinking of having a sex change, and he encouraged me to do it quickly, because he knew that a woman cannot be imprisoned for a crime committed by a man. Now that I am free, I plan to start a new crime-free life as a woman, and am looking forward to getting married." *(Ero magazine [Holland], 27/7/2005. Spotter: Alistair Miller)*

– ● –

● *"Basically, his colon was ruptured, along with his lower organs," Police Commander Eric Sortland told reporters in Enumclaw, Washington state, "and he bled to death after suffering massive trauma from extensive internal injuries. When we first arrived at the ranch, the other men there said they had no idea how it had happened, but then we found a cache of hundreds of hours of videotaped man-on-beast sex sessions, hidden in a barn, and realised we were dealing with a bestiality ring. These people were very diligent in filming their activities, and eventually we found what we were looking for: actual footage of the man being thoroughly sodomised to death by a stallion.*

"Odd as it may seem, sex with animals is not barred by law in Washington state, so men have been coming to this ranch from all over the US to take part. The videotapes showed us everything they got up to, with horses, goats, sheep, dogs, chickens, squirrels, even a fish. From the medical examiner's office to the sheriff to the police detectives, we have never seen anything remotely close to what we've been watching over the past two weeks. No arrests have been made, because

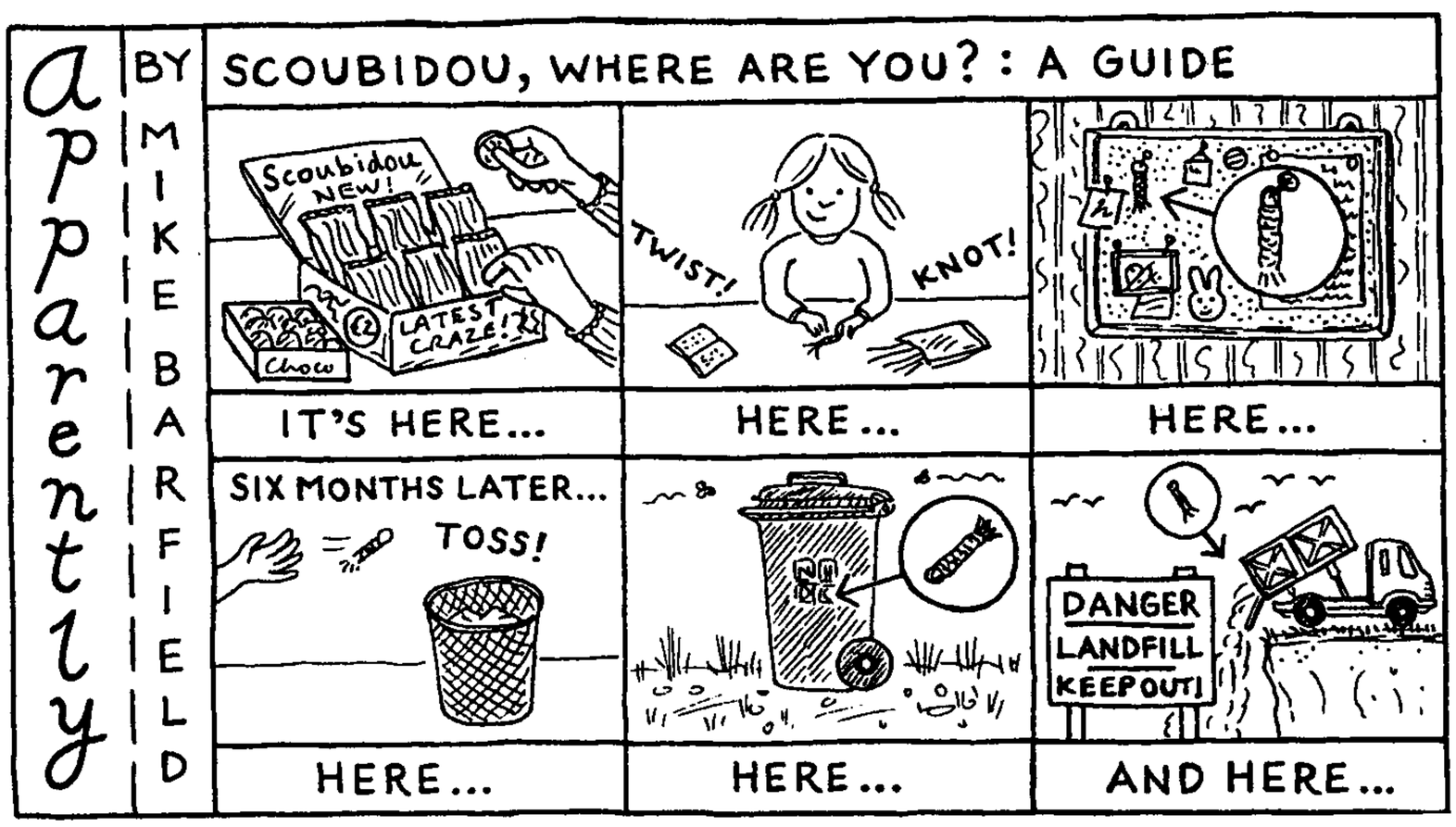


no clear crime has been committed. But we're reviewing all the tapes to see if any of the smaller animals suffered, because even though bestiality isn't a crime in this state, animal cruelty is." (Bangkok Post, 18/7/2005. Spotter: Carl Eve)

– ● –

● "This is the first human-poultry interaction system ever developed for the Internet," Professor Adrian David Cheok of the National University told reporters in Singapore, "and we've been working on it for over two years. We understand the perceived eccentricity of developing a system for humans to interact with chickens remotely. But this is just the beginning, and before long our work will have a much wider significance."

Earlier, Professor Cheok had demonstrated his revolutionary Touchy Internet system, which enables people to stroke a chicken remotely via cyberspace. "Users touch this chicken-shaped doll, which duplicates the actions of a real chicken through a webcam link. It's fitted with touch sensors which send tactile information over the internet to another computer, near a real live chicken. This second computer triggers tiny vibration motors in a lightweight jacket worn by the chicken, so the bird feels the user's touch in the exact same places that the doll was stroked. At present, we're only working with poultry, but we plan to develop the system so that people who are allergic to cats and dogs will be able to caress their pets remotely. Used in zoos, it will even be possible to pat a lion or scratch a bear. And who knows? In the future, it may be possible for people to hug each other via the internet. Perhaps they might even have sex remotely." *(IT World, 26/5/2005. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)*



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

And there's only really been one thing happening in the past couple of weeks – no, not the hurricane, Dean, although of course that's very sad and we're all very sorry for our good friend the Rev. Dubya, who frankly cannot be blamed for what's happened, which was an Act of God, and, honestly, to blame the Rev. Dubya for it is like blaming Noah for the flood, when all he was trying to do was to save everyone!

Anyway, it's only too easy, isn't it, to blame the man in charge when something goes wrong – when usually it is not their fault at all, but that of lots of other people below them who aren't up to the job, such as Mr Byers... but I digress.

It's not the hurricane that's the important thing. I know from all your letters and emails and texts that what really concerns you on a day-to-day basis is the flood of loutish and anti-social behaviour that is engulfing the streets of our parish!

Everywhere we look we see young people behaving badly – stuffing their lager cans into people's garden hedges, spitting out their chewing gum onto our pavements, spraying graffiti on the walls of the bus shelter, and – I'm sorry to say it – drunkenness, drunkenness, drunkenness. The 'Three D's', as I call them!

Well, it really doesn't have to be like that!

And I've thought long and hard about how to tackle this problem. No, Vijay, I'm not going to resign. That's not funny or clever. In fact, it's an example of precisely the kind of rude, nasty, thoughtless behaviour that I am determined to stamp out, right across the parish.

And that's why I've come up with my Two-Point Plan, which I've called my 'Respect Plan'.

1. To alleviate the problem of drunkenness, the Britannia Arms should remain open for 24 hours a day, so that everyone will be free to continue drinking steadily and in a civilised manner, rather than having to indulge in binge-drinking sessions just because the pub is about to close. Makes sense, doesn't it?

2. I have asked my good friend Mrs Casey to become the St Albion's Respect 'czar', spearheading our new campaign to teach the kids how to behave properly.

And, hey, let's admit it. It's not just the kids who get drunk and swear and create a thorough nuisance of themselves.

It's Mrs Casey as well! And that's the whole point of why I have appointed her! You all remember the scene she created at the Harvest Supper, when she knocked back a whole bottle of Communion wine and started swearing at everyone.

Some of the older parishioners may have been shocked when she described the PCC

as "a bunch of w***ers" and suggested that it was a good idea to be drunk all the time because it helps you to work better.

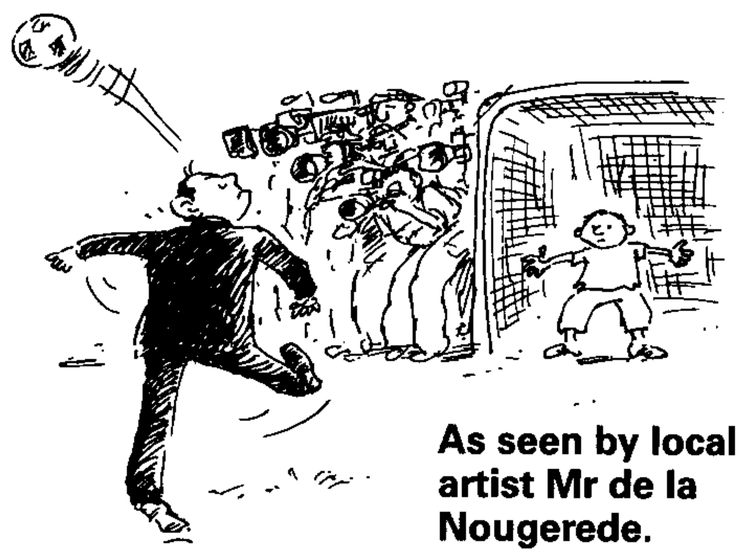
But I take a different view. The very fact that Mrs Casey is a foul-mouthed alcoholic makes her ideally qualified to head up our Anti-Social Behaviour Task Force, because she knows just where these kids are coming from! Ok?

Which brings me to my second point. As I'm sure you know, I have recently returned from our mission to China, where I have been preaching the word to our Chinese brethren.

It was a very successful and enlightening trip, with both sides learning a great deal about each other's spiritual point of view!

Cherie came along with me, and was delighted to be able to get some early Christmas shopping, when she bought several hundred bras and T-shirts for only the equivalent of 20p! It's hard to think that children of five can make such wonderful garments! There's a lesson there for our own five-year-olds who are getting drunk and falling around in the streets!

Anyway, much to my surprise, our hosts invited me to play a game of football.



As seen by local artist Mr de la Nougerede.

Some reports in our local media have tried to suggest that I kept missing the goal. But let me say, it is they, the journalists, who have 'missed' the point! Of course I wasn't trying to kick the ball into the goal.

I was deliberately missing the goal, and for a very good reason. 'Respect' for my Chinese hosts, who are very sensitive about losing face. In fact you can even be locked up if you cause offence or upset them!

So can we please hear no more about our vicar 'missing the target', because that's one thing I never do!

Which brings me back to my first point, which is the theme of this newsletter. The three 'R's' – 'Respect', 'Respect' and 'Respect'.

Which is why, for this week's evening service, I have written a new chorus to remind us all of how important it is to show respect to each other.

Respect, respect, respect,
It's what we all expect,
Respect, respect, respect,
It's what we mustn't neglect!

Words and music T. Blair 2005

(Taken from '100 Hymns For Binge-Drinkers', which can be downloaded onto your iPod from the vicarage website www.welovetony.org

Yours 'respectfully', Tony

A Message From Rev. Dubya Of The Church Of Latter-Day Morons

Brothers and sisters in New Englandland Land – I thank you all for your prayerfulness and your condoleezzences at this time of despairitude.

But make no mistake – this is the work of the Lord, as is foretold in the Words of the Prophet, "Yea, there shall come a mighty wind and great waves and ye shall do damn all about it".

Thus saith the Lord and who am I to question the will of the Almighty?

No, siree! My job is to watch and pray. Pray and watch. Look at my watch and pray that everything turns out ok as time ticks away for poor old Dubya!

So my congratuity goes out to you all again in my hour of needfulnosity.

And my message to all you drowning black folks in Noo Orleans – Hang on in there, a piece of my old ma's cherry pie is coming your way, courtesy of Brother Rumsfeld's Heat-'n'-Eat CherryPieToGo Corporation, which is looking after all your wants in this hour of your death!

God be with you,
for I am not.
Rev. Dubya

Advertisement

Relive the greatest moments of the 2005 Ashes series with Gnome's exclusive

Rain Highlights DVD

Includes:

- Rain stops play
- Umbrellas go up
- Rain stops play again
- Covers come on
- Empty ground in rain
- Man in Kagool eats sandwich
- Close-up of rain on puddle.

***PLUS* whole bonus DVD of top light meter action with Umpires Bowden and Koertzen.**

Over 3 hours of nail-biting, world-class light meter checking, as black clouds roll in again.

Not on the DVD

Thrill to it all a second time with Gnome's Ashes 2005 Rain Highlights.

On sale now at Gnomebuster Video for an incredible £999.99 (Check local stores for availability)

WARNING: Many of these scenes are filmed in very bad light and the DVDs may appear to be simply blank tapes.

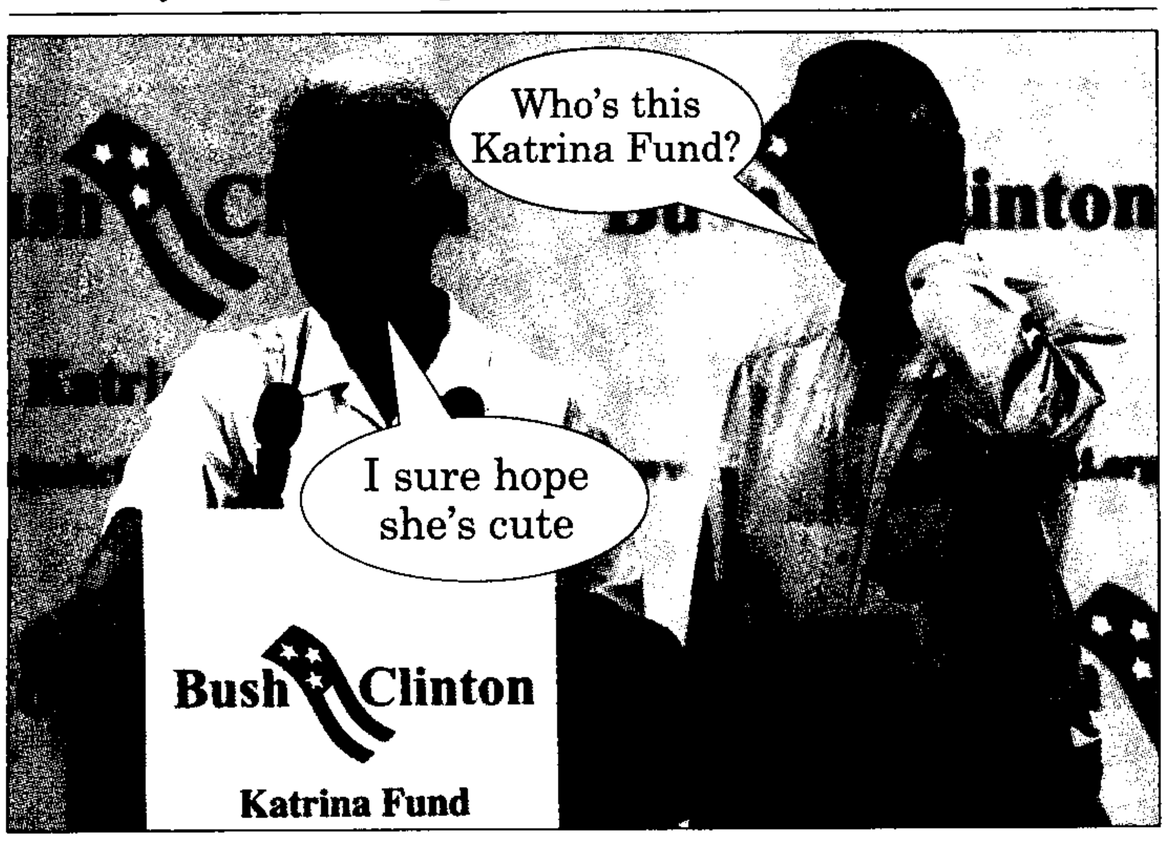
A Taxi Driver writes

Every week a well-known cabbie is invited to advise the Government on a topical issue of the day.

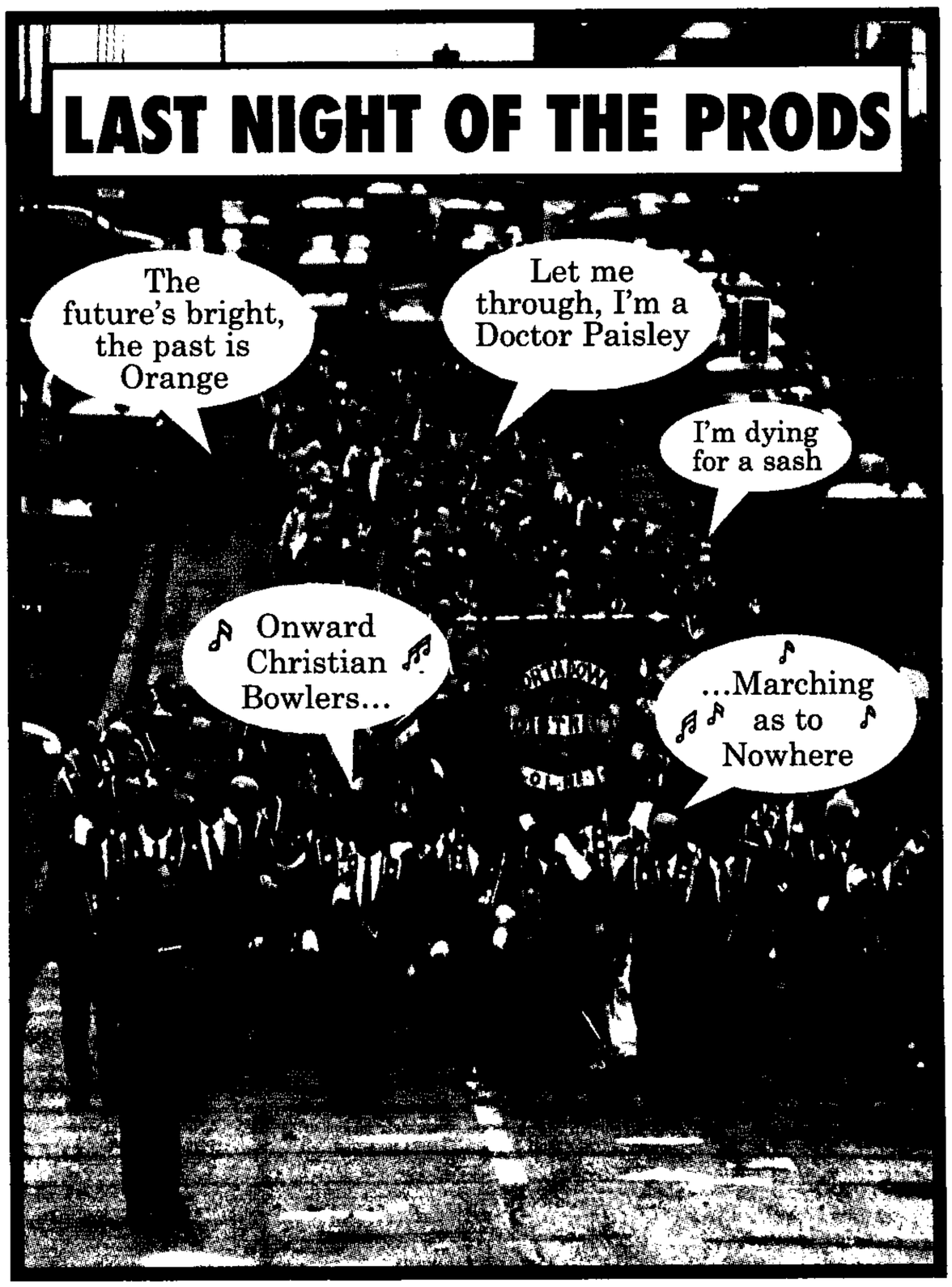
THIS WEEK: **Ahmad Thompson** (Cab no. 666) on the decision to invade Iraq.

I mean it's obvious guv innit? It's them Jews again. They're behind it, they're behind everything when you look at it – them and the Freemasons. I mean that Jack Straw, he's one of the apron and funny handshake brigade and probably a Jew as well – with a name like Straw. Blunkett? He's Jewish as well and his dog too – you can tell, that dog it won't eat no bacon, another cabbie told me that and he'd had him in the back of the cab. No, the reason Blair (obviously Jewish) went to war along with Bush (another Jew) was because he was told to by the Chief Rabbi who's gotta be Jewish, hasn't he, stands to reason, and his best friend, the Chief Wizard of the Grand Temple, the Duke of Kent... Jewish or what? Where am I from, guv? I'm from Zimbabwe so don't go calling me a racist or I'll take you to Heathrow via Newcastle.

NEXT WEEK: The Myth of the Holocaust.



HOW TIMES CHANGE


LAST NIGHT OF THE PRODS
The future's bright, the past is Orange
Let me through, I'm a Doctor Paisley
I'm dying for a sash
Onward Christian Bowlers...
...Marching as to Nowhere

Private Eye No. 954, Friday, 10 July 1998

POETRY CORNER

Lines on the retirement of Richie Benaud, Australian cricketer and commentator

So. Farewell
Then Richie
Benaud.

You have
Retired – 74
Not out.

"Good morning,
Everyone. It's a
Lovely day
Here at Lord's."

That was your
Catchphrase.

Unless of
Course you
Were at the
Oval.

And it was
Raining.

L.B.W. Thribb (17½)

Max Hastings

Grauniad

ADVERTISEMENT

Lord Gnome proudly announces the minting of a new £5 coin to commemorate the coming of age of His Royal Highness Prince Harry of Hofmeister and Holsten-Pils
(surely 'Sexe-Carlsberg'? Ed.)

'Piss-heads or tails?'

This investment of a lifetime can be yours for a mere £500. A stunning work of coin craftsmanship by master engraver Dame Daphne de Stothard NBG, cast in silver-style nickelodeon, this royal heritage item will be treasured by you, your lovechildren, their partners, their stepchildren and their carers for years to come.

Harry, Harry, while stocks last!

Send money now to Gnome Coin Offer, Unit 94, The Wheatcroft Trading Estate, Devizes, Wilts.

EXCLUSIVE TO ALL NEWSPAPERS

Legover Don Dead

An appreciation of the career of the late Maurice Cowling, of Peterhouse College, Cambridge, the distinguished historian and contributor to the philosophical reshaping of late 20th century Conservatism by **Lunchtime O'Bituarist**

ANYONE who thinks that sexual shenanigans at the Spectator magazine are a modern phenomenon, associated with such luminaries of legover as Mr Boris Johnson, Miss Petronella Wyatt and Mrs Kimberly Fortier, the inamorata of the sex-crazed former Home Secretary, Mr David Blunkett *(Get on with it. Ed.)*, would do well to consider the shocking scandal which rocked that once-respected organ some 100 years ago, when the magazine's literary editor Mr Maurice Cowling engaged in three-in-a-house love romps with the wife of the then-editor Mr George G. Ale.

Despite being known as the philosophical father of Thatcherism, and the ideological mentor of such titans of modern political comment as Sir Charles Moore, Sir Simon 'Jerusalem' Heffer, Sir Michael Portillo and Mr Christopher Silvester, it is much more interesting to dwell on the lubricious sex tangles of that distant and long-forgotten age *(cont. p. 94)*

THE TIMES

BBC apologises for 'outrageous' Humphrys outburst

By Our Government Correspondent
Tom Ballsup

BBC CHIEF Michael Grade last night issued a grovelling apology to Alastair Campbell for what he called "an unforgivable dereliction of duty" by the BBC's star political correspondent Mr John Humphrys.

Smearing himself with ashes, Mr Grade, clad only in sackcloth and his trademark red braces, said, "The BBC stands for impartiality, integrity, decency and pornography. *(Surely 'leopardskin accessories'? Ed.)*

"Mr Humphrys has let himself and the Corporation down very badly by the unseemly comments he is reputed to have made at a private dinner.

"We are deeply sorry," Mr Grade concluded, "for the hurt and anguish Mr Humphrys's ill-considered and disgraceful tirade has inflicted on senior members of the government and their families and their live-in partners.

"We should all be shot – particularly Mr Humphrys, who I can pledge now will never work again for the BBC until tomorrow morning."

Today Man's Rant Of Hate In Full – What Humphrys Said

On Tony Blair: "Occasionally one can't believe every word he says."

On Gordon Brown: "A bit of an old bore who drones on."

On John Prescott: "Not exactly the sharpest knife in the drawer."

On Peter Mandelson: "Not as universally popular as some of his colleagues."

On himself: "Can I have my money please – preferably in cash."

LORD BRAGG names the 10 books that changed the world

❶ The London Telephone Directory (2005)

Although this is not strictly a book, it is highly readable and includes many influential names from the worlds of literature, science and plumbing.

❷The Boden Catalogue (1998).

Although this is not strictly a book, this informative and entertaining guide to men's fashion in the late 1990s gives a vivid snapshot of how we were in that formative decade.

❸The Highway Code (1952).

Although this is not strictly a book, this slim volume codified the etiquette of driving for a whole generation, and influenced millions of motorists.

❹The Carol Vorderman Book of Sudoku (also available on CD-ROM).

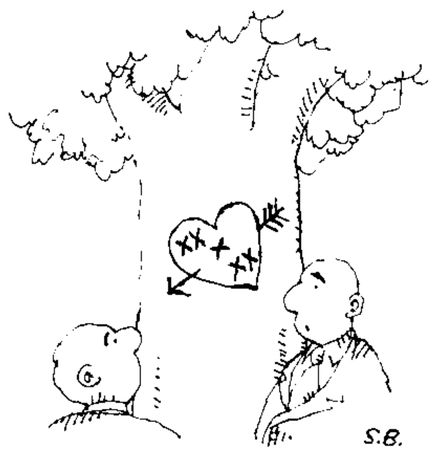
Although this is not strictly a book, this anthology of classic Sudoku puzzles compiled by one of the most distinguished mathematicians of her age was viewed as making a greater contribution to improving mental health among the elderly than anything the pharmaceutical industry had to offer.

❺Lord Birt's McBraggart Lecture To The Edinburgh Festival Of The Televisual Arts (2005).

Although this is not strictly a book, or indeed in any sense worth reading, it is worthy of mention as a reflection of the collapse of literacy and intelligence in the Britain of the early 21st century.

❻Sex Among The Daffodils (1975) by Melvyn Bragg.

Although this is not strictly a book, this brilliant novel by myself, about a Wordsworth-loving Cumbrian bank manager who seduces a barmaid on the banks of Derwentwater, is *(cont. p. 94)*



"Well, in my day, we could at least carve our own initials!"

The Delphi Telegraph 2 Obols

Atlantis – It Must Never Happen Again

BY OUR FLOOD STAFF AMANDA PLATO

As the world woke up to the scarcely believable disaster which has engulfed the great city of Atlantis, one message came out loud and clear from all sides of the political spectrum – it must never happen again.

For centuries, oracles had warned that building a city several cubits below sea-level was a disaster waiting to happen.

Shock

The noted hydrological expert Professor Cassandra of Troy University repeatedly went on record prophesying that sooner or later the city of Atlantis would be flooded, bringing death and destruction to all its inhabitants.

However, the prophetess's cries of woe were ignored, as the citizens of the famous "party city" continued to eat, drink and make music without any thought for tomorrow.

The few survivors of the worst natural catastrophe the ancient world has known were quick last night to blame the Atlantis state authorities for failing to build up the sea walls which could have saved the city from inundation.

"Instead of looking after our homeland security," shouted one enraged Atlantean from his rooftop, "all our troops have been sent to Mesopotamia.

"No wonder there is no one here to save us," he added, as his house finally sank beneath the waves.

Britons Feared Lost In Flood Disaster

Two ancient Britons, Sid and Doris Flintstone, were among those who *(cont. p. 94)*

EYE ETHIOPIA DISASTER APPEAL

As the shocking pictures of starving people are transmitted round the world, and the true scale of the natural disaster becomes apparent, how can we stand by and watch heart-breaking images of dying babies in the first world?

That is why we are appealing to Ethiopia to help the poverty-stricken inhabitants of New Orleans in their hour of need.

Please give generously because the world's richest country obviously can't cope.

On Other Pages

"Why should we send aid?" **asks M'Ax M'Hastings**, "The local gangsters will only steal it all."

AMERICAN SPORTS NEWS

Bayou Boy Rapists vs French Quarter Looters
(New Orleans Superdome 2nd Sept)

EXPECT bone-crunching action and mayhem aplenty as these two evenly matched gangs go head-to-head in this long-anticipated sudden-death play-off grudge match for the last bottle of drinking water.

The winner goes on to meet the National Guard in a tense shoot-out decider in a Wal-Mart on Canal Street.

HURRICANE DISASTER

'HELP ME!' – DROWNING MAN'S PLEA

by Our Man In Washington **Bill Oxi**

TODAY I saw with my own eyes one of the most tragic spectacles I ever hope to witness.

Standing alone on the roof of what was once his home, as a flood of toxic filth rose ever higher towards his isolated refuge, a solitary white male survivor shouted, "Please save me! I don't know what to do. I've lost everything."

When our helicopter got near enough for me to speak to him, the inarticulate Texan sobbed out to me his pathetic story.

"They tell me my name is George Dubya Bush," he stammered. "Everything seemed to be going along just fine and dandy until this hurricane came along. The next thing I knew, I was up to my neck in effluents. And my world just fell apart."

While we spoke, he was joined on the rooftop by several friends and neighbours, who were also desperately trying to avoid the rising tide of dead bodies and costly insurance premiums that threatened to submerge them.

They gave their names as Condy 'Gumbo' Rice, Donny 'Jamaican' Rumsfeld and Dick 'Halliburton' Cheney.

Most tragic of all was the sight of Mr Bush's aged mother rowing a small yacht around Washington in the hope of drawing attention to her son's plight.

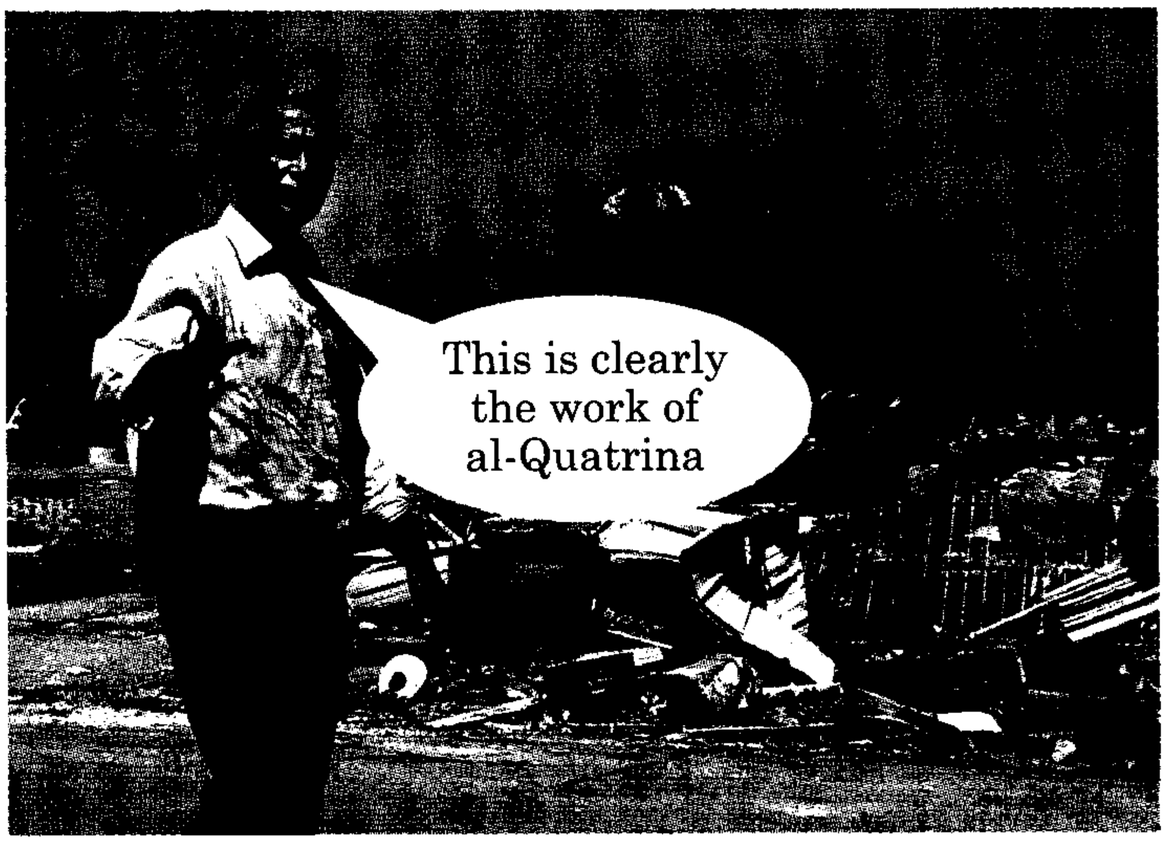
"It's all right for them poor black folks. They got nothing to lose but their lives. But who's gonna save my boy? Nobody, that's who."

CITY THREATENED BY NEW FLOOD

by Our Entire Staff **Phil City**

THE CITY of New Orleans was yesterday submerged under a tidal wave of journalists and TV crews from all over the world, asking people how they felt to be drowning, starving etc. and whether they thought George Bush was to blame.

Fortunately by sundown the flood had disappeared as quickly as it had arrived, when all the journalists went back to their hotels to watch pictures of themselves interviewing people on what it felt like to be drowning etc.



Daily Mail

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2005 40p

HOUSE PRICES WILL RISE UNDER CLARKE – Official

By **Paul Dacre**
Political Correspondent

HOMEOWNERS and estate agents across the country were last night preparing themselves for the biggest explosion in house prices the market has ever seen.

What they are all banking on is a runaway victory for front-runner Ken Clarke in the Tory leadership stakes.

In an exclusive interview with the Daily Mail, Clarke told me of his amazing plans for the Britain he wishes to see when the Tory party, under his leadership, has won the next election.

The Clarke Ascending

When I asked him whether he could guarantee all Daily Mail readers an increase of up to 1000 percent in the value of their homes, he vigorously shook his head in agreement.

Make no mistake. Here is proof positive that this is the man to take Britain's homeowners into the multi-millionaire bracket and lead the Tory Party back to power by a landslide.

Exclusive Daily Mail Poll

Why They Are Voting For Ken

An exclusive survey commissioned by the Daily Mail from the independent polling organisation YouKen, shows support for Mr Clarke running at a massive 98 percent.

Asked to choose between loveable Ken Clarke and some dim little man of whom nobody has heard, the vast majority of voters said, "We love Ken. He's the one with the Hush Puppies and the cigar who's going to double the value of our house. He's our man every time. That is what you told me to say, isn't it?".

On Other Pages ■ How Your Home Will Boom Under Cuddly Ken 10 ■ Ban These Killer Sudokus Now writes Melanie Phillips

YE DAILY TELEGRAPH

September 1785

Is This Man Too Young To Lead The Tory Party?

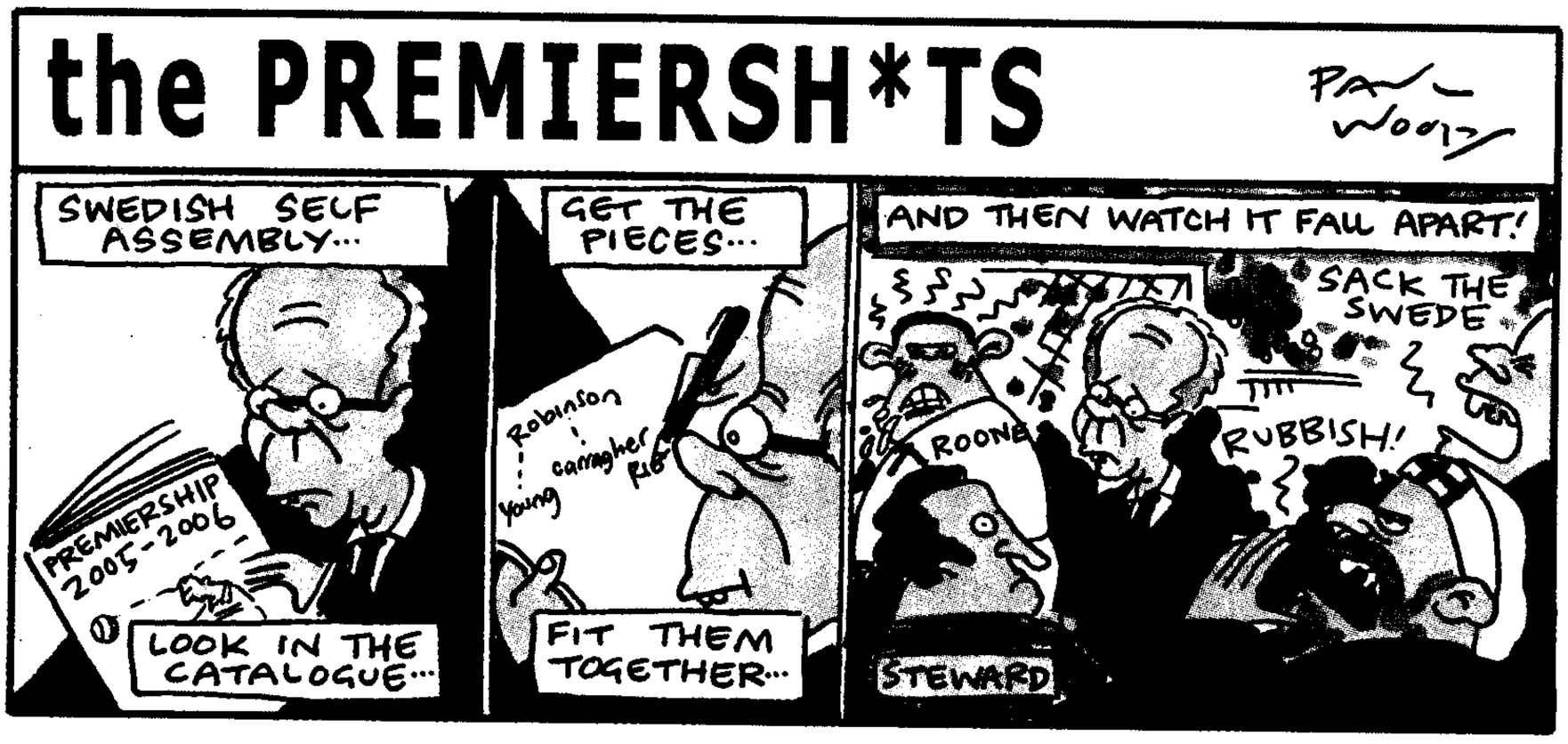
by William Deedes

He's the upstart new kid on the block. The 'boy wonder' from the privileged background who wants to be Conservative leader at the tender age of 24. But is it too soon for this precious political talent to take on the top job?

Surely we would be better advised to choose somebody older, with more experience of government and with more popular appeal than this Oxbridge wonderboy who has come from nowhere.

That is why we say vote for Pitt the Elder who (cont. p. 94)

the PREMIERSH*TS



SHEIKH IN ROYAL STING

THE infamous News of the World Sheikh has apologised to the tabloid's readers after he was duped by "a fake royal".

"She looked like the genuine article, but I now realise I was taken in," said a contrite Sheikh. "If I'd given it a moment's thought I would have realised she was obviously bogus and *(cont. p. 94)*

HORSEMEN WALK FREE IN APOCALYPSE CASE

by Our Railtrack Staff **Conor Crash O'Train**

THE FOUR horsemen who had been blamed for the deaths of millions in the notorious Apocalypse disaster were yesterday absolved of any blame for the tragedy.

The four men, named as Keith Death, Reg Famine, Arnold War and Derek Plague, all denied "corporate responsibility" for the deaths.

Old Hatfield

Their legal representative, Mr B.L. Zebub QC, said, "My clients are naturally relieved at the court's sensible decision to blame our subcontractors for this unfortunate incident – i.e. the end of the world."

TORY LEADERSHIP RULE CHANGE THREAT

by **Peter O'Bore**

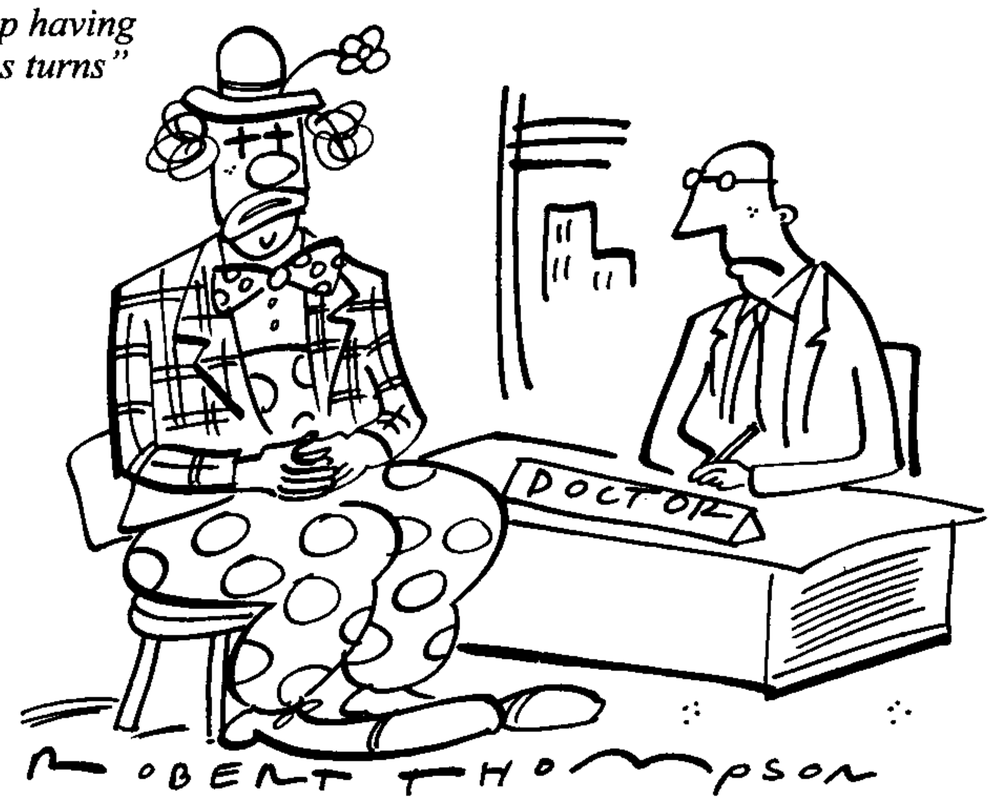
THERE were growing signs today that Tory grass-roots members will reject a proposed change in the party rules regarding the election of a new leader.

"The rule states that the Conservative party must always elect a dull uncharismatic leader who will lose the next election," said one constituency chairman, "and, while it has served us well, we're considering an alternative."

A senior member of the 1922 Committee however urged caution, saying he was sure that at the last minute they would revert to type and elect David Davies as leader.

"That's the script for our next movie"

"I keep having serious turns"



OSBOURNE PROPOSES 'FAT TAX'

by **Simon Hefferlump**

SHADOW Chancellor George Osbourne has confirmed that he's looking very seriously at proposals for the introduction of a "fat tax", which would specifically target Tory leadership hopeful Ken Clarke.

"We believe that such a tax could seriously reduce Clarke's chance of mounting a successful campaign for the Tory leadership." *(Reuters)*

A Doctor Writes

AS A doctor, I'm often asked, "Doctor, is the Tory Party dead?".

Whilst the symptoms all indicate that the party has long since ceased to exist, with no brain activity recorded for several years, it is possible that the party is merely in a coma and could be revived with a large shock to the system.

This could be achieved by an extremely unlikely figure being made leader of the party, such as myself, in which case the party could wake up and ask, "Who on earth are you?".

If you are worried about Ken Clarke being leader, you should vote for your doctor at once.

© Dr L. Fox

POETRY CORNER

That Sir John Major KG Poem In Full

Roses are red,
Tories are blue,
I like cricket
And bonking
Mrs Currie too.

Oh yes.

She said: "There are over 500,000 dogs in the UK who go untreated for osteoarthritis each year and 80 per cent of them are in moderate to severe pain.

"This means a staggering number of vets could be suffering unnecessarily.

Adnews (Hastings & St Leonards)

Builth Wells High headteacher Gill Firth said the results were better overall than last year's 100 per cent success.

Shropshire Star

"Woke up this mornin'
Someone had looted ma guitar..."

Millions Queue All Night For New Berliner

BY OUR MEDIA STAFF **HARRY POTTER**

MILLIONS began to queue at newsagents early on Sunday evening to make sure of getting their copy of the new-look Guardian newspaper in the so-called 'Rubbisher' format.

Many dressed up as their favourite character from the newspaper, wearing owlish glasses and boyish corduroy jackets.

"I love Alan Rusbridger," said a happy fan. "He is an amazing wizard who can turn my favourite newspaper into rubbish overnight."

Harry Potter and the Half-Sized Guardian

Berliner Fever had been mounting for months as leaks of the new-look paper began to filter through. All over Britain people talked of little else, and even the Ashes were forgotten, as on Monday morning crowds thronged at their local W.H. Smith in the hope of buying a two-for-one soft-drink-'n'-sarnie offer *(Surely 'copy of the exciting Berliner'? Ed.)*.

But the mood of the fans soon turned ugly as disappointment replaced the euphoria that had swept the nation in previous weeks.

Dumbledor-ing Down

One man, dressed up as columnist Simon Hogwarts and carrying a photograph of the Spectator's Mrs Quinn told me, "Size isn't everything, you know. Small is beautiful and that goes for the Guardian's new-look circulation too".

However, the reclusive Guardian editor, J.K. Rubbisher, who has refused to give more than 700 interviews this week, defended his latest work. Echoing the famous words of J.F. Kennedy, he declared, "Ich... Berliner in bin".

(This article has been set in the new sans serious typeface.)

GLENDA SLAGG

FLEET STREET'S WICKED MAIDEN!! GEDDIT??!!

■ SO JORDAN's got married!!!? Who cares??!? What's she ever done to warrant newspapers going on and on and on about her!!!?! Jordan's carriage, Jordan's dress, Jordan's boobs, Jordan's everything else!?!! Jordan!?! Jordan?!! Jordan!! I'm sick of just writing her name?!!? We're not interested Mr Noosman, so write about something else!!?!?

■ WHAT'S happened to us??! The nation that gave us Lord Nelson and Sir Francis Drake has nothing better to do than sit a-dribblin' and a-droolin' over pix of Jordan and Andre when there are loads of other people we've never heard of getting married too!!!? Jodie Kidd, Kate Garraway, Tom Parker Bowles. Celebrities???!? Don't make me laugh!!! These people are about as famous as my hamster – and you don't see pictures of him in Hello! magazine every time he gets married??!?

■ CRIKEY!!!? What type of world do we live in when I'm reduced to writing about my hamster getting married!!?! Ok, so he can run around in a wheel faster than most people – but do people really want to read about him in a national newspaper!!!? We must be stark, staring mad!!??! *(You're fired. Ed.)*

■ HERE they are – Glenda's September Sizzlers:

● **Andrew Marr** – I'd like to wake up with you on a Sunday morning!?! I hope everything is as big as your ears!!??! Geddit??!?

● **Anthony Howard** – So the Times have given you the sack!??! You can share mine any day, oldster!!?? Geddit???!?

● **Matthew McFadyen** – You may not be Colin Firth in your wet shirt, but I fancy the D'Arcy off you anyway!!!?!?

● **Kofi Annan** – Mmmm??? Dark and strong??!? Anyone for some late night Kofi round at my place??!? Yes, please!!? (Geddit!!??)

Byeeee!!!

Everyone knew him as mild-mannered Ken Clarke but he was hiding a secret identity...
BRITISH AMERICAN TOBAC
CHIEF OF MARKETING
HOLY SMOKE! There's a small boy in Vietnam who is in no danger at all!
The call goes out...
Into my B.A.T.Mobile with my trusty packet of 200 filter-tipped
This is a job for B.A.T.Man
Take that! And That!
Thanks B.A.T.Man - I'm hooked!
All in a non-executive day's work! Now for my toughest challenge - persuading people to take up Conservatism!
No thanks B.A.T.Man I've given up!
Why don't you just Fag Off?

DIARY

HRH PRINCESS MICHAEL OF KENT

These days, it's all take. That is true, is it not? It is all me, me, me.

How has it come to this? But as for myself, I am different. I try not to think of myself ever, no? Instead, I look in the mirror, and then I look again, this time for much longer, and, you know, I like what I see. Because the person I see looking back at me is not just a beautiful person, but a good person, a kind person, a person who will never, ever be content to just sit back and think only of herself.

I'm sorry, I admit it, it's one of my failings, perhaps my only one: I want to give something back to the world. Take this chair I am sitting on, for instance. It is a beautiful chair, of course it is. But early next week, I shall be giving it back. Yes, I shall be giving it back to Deluxe Seating of Andover, the excellent company that most graciously loaned it to me on condition I give them the dearest little mention from time to time.

Or if not next week, the week after, or at least some time early in the new year: April, May, September, that sort of thing. I am a very busy lady, very busy indeed. A tiny little company like that cannot expect one to go scurrying around returning their wretched chairs, not when one has so many important Royal duties to attend to. I mean, really! Who do they think they are, may one ask?

Unlike some Royals I could name, I have a very great deal of sympathy for those poor, poor people of New Orleans. My heart may be royal, but it goes out to those very ordinary folk. Like them, I know what it is like to have to give up one's home. And for what? Nothing! Nether Lypiatt has been on the market for six months now, and what am I told I can expect for it? Six million pounds!

And you tell me this – what will six million pounds buy you these days? Nothing, nothing at all! So when I switch on the television to watch those charming little people in New Orleans sitting on their rooftops, soaked to the skin, their homes in the most terrible mess, believe me, I know exactly what they are feeling. Like them, I know only too well how impossible it is these days to get decent staff.

Don't let anyone tell me it's easy being poor. I have to do all my own shopping, you know, and when I have filled up my trolley at the local Waitrose supermarket, I queue up to pay for it, or at least most of it, just like everybody else.

Of course, one is always ready to strike a bargain. I'm not shy to talk about money. Why should I be? How else does one live? Do you know what my mother always used to say to me when we went shopping together? She would say, "Shoplifters Will Be Prosecuted". She had read it somewhere. So I never shoplift – it is so unnecessary. But this does not mean one may not strike a bargain.

Only yesterday, I was happy to ask the charming little local Waitrose manager to be presented to me. One must always retain one's Royal dignity (you know, I sometimes think Lilibet takes her duties too lightly) so after asking him how long he had worked there, and whether they kept him busy, I moved onto the matter in hand.

"As you can imagine, in one's position as a famous Royal, one is expected to serve an enormous amount of champagne!" I confided. "And, do you know, I find it so tedious just asking my guests, "Champagne, anyone?" I would so much rather say, "Would you care for another glass of Waitrose's truly excellent own-brand champagne, as downed by my first cousin, Her Majesty the Queen?"

The manager looked a little taken aback by my generous gesture. They are not used to speaking to Royalty, bless them! But I set him at his ease. It would, I went on to insist, be unbecoming for a Royal to discuss fees there and then. "You must of course do your calculations and come back to me!" I said, delightfully. At that point, he offered me a free bite-size sample of Waitrose's delicious Edam cheese. I graciously took a dozen. "You are naughty!" I said, "Before long, you will be getting me to spill the beans on Charles and Camilla!"

And one should never overlook the shopping trolley. I am a great believer in keeping one's trolley. There is nothing in the rules to say you can't, and it provides good jobs for many in the trolley manufacturing sector.

We have three dozen or more trolleys in the small barn at Nether Lypiatt, all stacked ready for a rainy day. These days, I tell all prospective purchasers that if they pay the full price for the house I will be very happy to throw in a shopping trolley for free. "You can always tell your friends that I pushed it myself!" I laugh graciously. They are delighted. You see, you have to think of others. You must try to spread a little happiness. As my old mother used to say, life is all about give and take and take and take.

One likes to do things properly. Our dinner parties at Nether Lypiatt were always widely praised. This is because one wouldn't be dreary and stick to the local landed bores. Far from it. One would invite all kinds of interesting people, some of whom would obviously expect to pay, some of whom would not.

I never charged H.M. the Queen, for instance. I am not saying she is careful with her money, but let me put it this way: she has never once enclosed a postal order with her annual Christmas card, no matter how many times I have enclosed an invoice for the year's hectic Royal duties.

But of course one was fully entitled to ask the personages one placed next to her – a gentleman from Abu Dhabi, as I remember, and a man from the motor trade – to make a reasonable contribution to the event, perhaps in the upper five figures, or else to deliver a perfectly lovely vehicle with all the fixtures and fittings to us by noon the next day.

One must at all times be *seemly*. Fortunately, I was born and bred an aristocrat, so, believe me, I know how these things should be done. My golden rules for entertaining? Dancing should take place after dinner only if it was promised in the brochure. Speeches should be kept brief, unless one is being paid by the minute. Always keep your cash register a discreet distance from the exit. And it is not considered polite to tip The Queen.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER

JUST TO LET YOU KNOW SIR, PIXIE FROU FROU HAS INVITED HER BOYFRIEND OVER FOR SUNDAY LUNCH...
AS HE'S A PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALLER I'VE HAD TO CHANGE THE MENU.
WHY'S THAT, JOHNSON?
IS HE ON A SPECIAL DIET OR SOMETHING?
NO, SIR.
I SIMPLY DIDN'T THINK IT WAS WISE TO OFFER HIM A "ROAST", SIR...
AH. GOOD THINKING, JOHNSON...

● CRAIG BROWN will be reading from his Private Eye diaries at the ICA on 16 September ●

Literary Review

What You Didn't Miss, Pt. 94

On Beauty
Zadie Teeth
(Hamish Hamilton, £16.99)

ONE may as well begin with Kiki in the delicatessen.

"What I need," explained Kiki, hauling her mountainous two hundred and fifty pound African-American ass towards the counter, "is a homey, warm, chunk-filled, pastry-lovin', finger-lickin', hot-doggerty, down home kind of pie." She recalled being invincible and truth-loving and twenty years old, and thinking that if she could only be honest about the kind of pie she wanted, then she could emerge moist-eyed in the light that would drench her and those around her in its languorous aura.

"Hey there," said the brother behind the plastic sneeze-guard. "Heeey there. Ain't I seen you some place before?"

"...A kind of back-porch kind of pie, do you know what I mean? Nothing sour... or sassy."

"Sure I have. You been in one of them Zadie Smiths novel, sister."

"I don't..."

"Yes you have. Can tell. First there's the way you speak quite ordinary sentences but sorta emphasising quite arbitrary words, kind of like you was compensating for their dullness."

"It ain't..."

"Sure it is. Pretty soon you'll start talking in CAPITAL LETTERS, like it was some PRETTY IMPORTANT THING you was wanting to say. Only it AIN'T. Then, 'fore I know where I am, there'll be some huge, multi-cultural family jes' sashaying in from nowhere with names like Jerome 'n' Levi 'n' Zora..."

"Hold on there..."

"And the whole structure just insisting on its complex derivation from existing literary sources. In this case, sister, Mr E.M. fuckin' Forster. I mean, what is it about that girl? And her on the Man Booker shortlist an' all."

Suddenly, to her abstracted relief, Kiki found that Jerome, Levi and Zora were collected in a familial huddle at her side. She clutched them to her, asphyxiating them in the quaint caverns of her arm-pits.

"Yeah and I'll tell you some stuff about them. Like, one of them'll really be into black street culture..."

("...Yo my man" Kiki now heard Levi greet her, as they swapped a bunch of high fives. "Bin hangin' with my homies in the hood is all.")

"...And check out the chick with the college education, dropping some big fancy names..."

("...And I'm, like, saying to the poetry class" Zora presently informed her mother, "surely Foucault has negated all this?")

"You hear what I'm saying sister? Now, I knows it ain't easy for a girl to get herself in the newspapers every time she write a book. She gotta get herself looking real nice and have some fahn photograph that the editor of the Daily Telegraph's gonna love. Like she was in Destiny's Child or something. But, believe me you got a difficulty..."

But Kiki had seen the pie, golden and in the centre a red and yellow compote of sticky baked fruit. She thought of her husband, weaselly white-guy Howard, and whether she had quite done loving him. Still she managed to raise her face again towards the sneeze-guard.

"What kinda difficulty?"

"Sister... It ain't my place to say so, but you're generic."

"What so bad about that?"

The brother wrinkled his nose. "Well, curiously enough, in this particular case, nuthin'. I mean, honey, you read the chick in the Times Literary Supplement? Where it say that 'On Beauty's most interesting ethical endeavour is the way it fits itself so perfectly – happily inhabiting its own apparent slightness'?"

"What that mean?"

"Seems to me it means We have a problem here only I'm too polite to say so. But relax, honey, it ain't your fault you're campus-lite. Only it ain't gonna last for ever. Someone gonna see through the trick that girl playing, and then what, huh?"

Kiki exhaled vertiginously. "At least I'll have the pie," she said.

LIBRARY NEWS

■ AFTER culture minister David Lammy offered to spend just £4m refurbishing Britain's libraries "to make them a source of local pride" (at £930 per branch it was somewhat less than the £650m a Commons select committee said was needed), there was surprise all round when his boss, culture secretary Tessa Jowell, made an announcement of her own.

Just two weeks after Lammy's pathetic offer, Jowell promised a "£130m boost for library and sports projects..." of which £60m was to go on new libraries in Worcestershire, Newcastle and Liverpool. How did this extra money suddenly appear?

The small print won't surprise Eye readers for it reveals that the government money is actually in the form of "PFI credits" – ie taxpayer contributions to the costs of PFI deals that will be paid as local councils shell out for new buildings over anything up to 25 years.

Though MPs said that what's really needed is serious improvement to existing libraries, that isn't sexy enough to attract government PFI funding. For that you need grandiose new buildings that will be paid for by tomorrow's taxpayers while the costs become a future government's problem. Thus Jowell and Lammy can grab some glory while barely stumping up enough for a lick of paint.

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ IT LOOKS as if HMV, owner of Waterstone's, is to become the new owner of rival chain Ottakar's, having topped founder James Heneage's £91m management buyout bid by £5m.

Whether HMV succeeds or whether Heneage pulls a few more quid out of the hat, it's bad news for everyone but HMV. If it goes ahead, a combined OttaWater chain would control more than a quarter of UK book sales, something that publishers with their ever slenderer margins dread and which would almost certainly be awful news for customers as well. Remember how dreadful it was when WH Smug had a similar stranglehold on books in the high street, until Waterstone's and Ottakar's helped break it?

If HMV doesn't go all the way and lets Heneage have his day, it will still have had an extensive opportunity to peruse Ottakar's accounts and confidential plans, giving it a distinct advantage over the smaller company.

The reason cited for the MBO was that stock-market listing brought with it a pressure for constant expansion. Now, the source and the motivation have changed, but the pressure on Heneage and co is worse than ever.

■ IT WAS hoped that Naomi Campbell's swiftly-remaindered The Swan and the similarly underwhelming Star "by" Pamela Anderson had put paid to the ghost-written celebrity novel. But no!

Here comes Katie "Jordan" Price with two works of fiction and a further volume of autobiography, all bought by Random House's Century/Arrow division for a figure with "a lot of noughts" in it, according to agent Maggie Hanbury.

It's only 18 months since Being Jordan came out – is there really enough new material to make much more than a sizeable tabloid feature? Such dedication to posterity is known in the book trade as "doing a Ginger", Geri Halliwell having managed two autobiographies in three years, before she'd even turned 30.

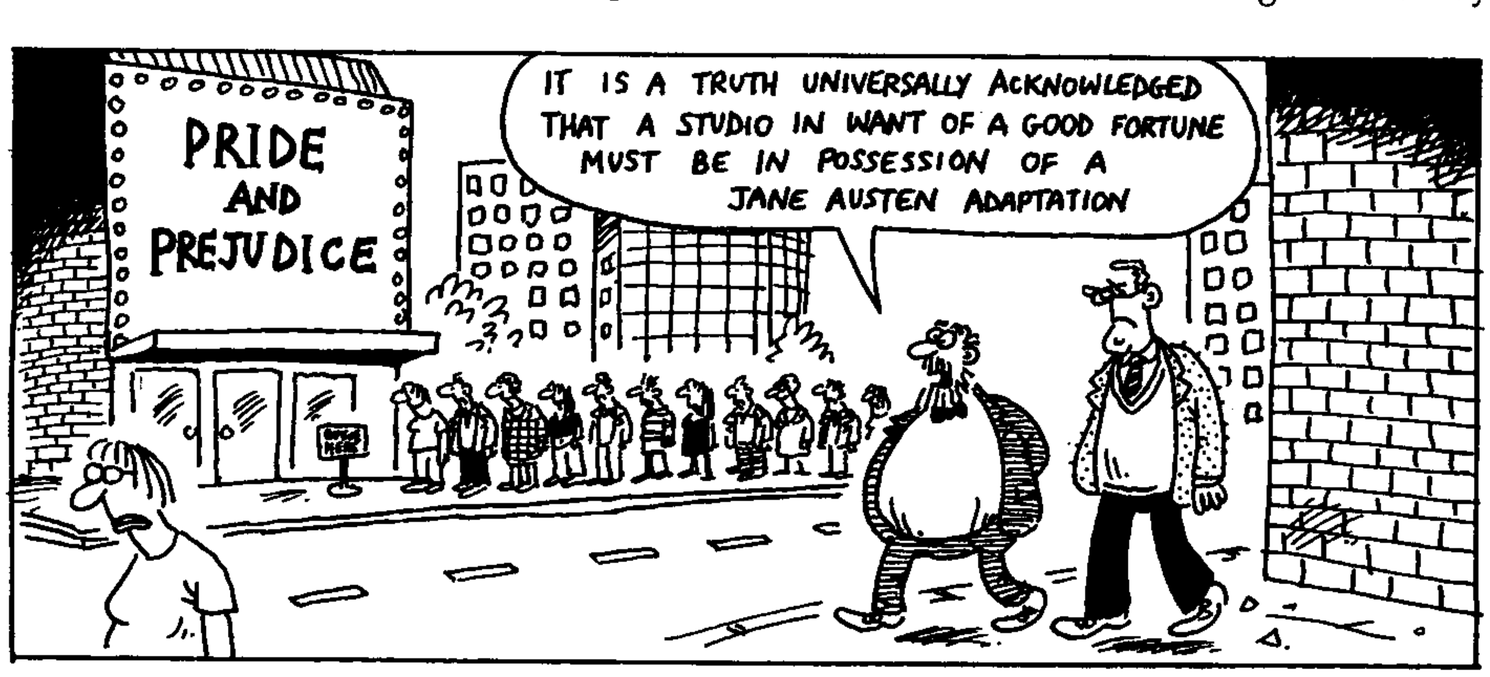
Without a word of the novels having been written – and indeed with the ghost yet to be appointed – we are assured they will be "sexy and irresistible". However, it will be remembered that the main attraction of Star was not the transparently autobiographical plot, nor the quality of the writing but the nudie picture of the "author" that became apparent when the dust jacket was removed. Sadly, as Jordan's novels will be going straight to paperback, Arrow will be unable to use such tactics to capture the lucrative one-handed market.

■ IT'S NOT common enough for unauthorised biographers to be sued by their subjects. But now unauthorised biographer Graham Lord is himself issuing legal threats – against one of his own alleged "sources".

His target is the film producer and former literary agent Robin Dalton, who is quoted several times in Lord's new unofficial life of Sir John Mortimer.

When she saw the book, Mrs Dalton wrote to Mortimer insisting she hadn't made some of the comments attributed to her. She also sent a letter of complaint to Graham Lord – only to receive, by way of reply, a fierce missive from Messrs Sue Grabbit & Runne warning that her remarks were grossly defamatory!

'Bookworm'


PRIDE AND PREJUDICE
IT IS A TRUTH UNIVERSALLY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT A STUDIO IN WANT OF A GOOD FORTUNE MUST BE IN POSSESSION OF A JANE AUSTEN ADAPTATION

Tony McGeorge, prosecuting, said: "He was found to have six 20gm deals of a drug he said was heroin for his own personal use, hidden between the cheeks of his bottom." The drug was found to be crack cocaine.

Oxford Times

Pseuds Corner

I would design an organically shaped coin – certainly not round and preferably not symmetrical – so that it represents the complexities of modern Britain.

ANTHONY GORMLEY on the future of our currency, *Observer*

I think the beauty of the time we live in and where we live is that everybody can walk into a room with different political ideologies, with different religions, with different thoughts about big themes and tiny themes and silly things. And fragrance should be the same – it should have social skills.

Actress SARAH JESSICA PARKER on the launch of her own perfume
*You **magazine***

...they suggest the vastness and force of intense feeling without articulating specific feelings. It's possible that such specificity, allied to music this powerful, would simply be too much to endure. What's great is the blankness, the attempt to capture the ineffable, a perfectly distilled happy/sadness somewhere between dogged resilience and weightless euphoria.

DAVID PESCHEK reviews a Mogwai gig
Guardian

Hudographies: co(a)gent spaces of companion species
The proposed sessions aim to advance the study of animal-human geographies through a focus on two species and their complex ways-of-relating: humans and dogs. Inspired by Haraway's (2003) manifesto, and by Michael's (2000) discussion of the hudogledog (human + doglead + dog), we want to use these sessions to explore what the former calls 'the inescapable contradictory story of relationships' between dogs and their humans; relationships which are co-constitutive, 'in which none of the partners pre-exist the relating, and the relating is never done once and for all.' [continues]

Call for papers for the Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting, March 2006

Imagine reading Borges for the first time, while listening to the White Album for the first time, and you're also drinking tequila for the first time and as that's happening Stephen Hawking rises from his wheelchair to do kung-fu on Jesus...

TOM PHILLIPS on *Sin City*
London Line

CONTRIBUTORS: John Collins, Nicola Norton, Stuart Codling, Andrew Hull, Nigel Baker.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

TRANSCO

Making a killing

THE trial of monopoly gas supplier Transco, once part of British Gas, for breaches of health and safety law gave a rare insight into the priorities of a privatised company over a decade that ended in the death of a family of four in a gas explosion in Larkhall, Lanarkshire, on 22 December 1999.

In Edinburgh's court of session last month Judge Lord Carloway fined the company a record £15m and described "a serious failure over many years of one of our main privatised utilities, a company in whom the public put their faith and to whom they pay substantial sums of money to ensure the safe transportation of their fuel".

The judge explained how as early as 1988 British Gas knew about the dangers lurking within "ductile iron" pipes after they had been underground for several years. An explosion in Warrington caused by leaks in just such a pipe had killed one person, after which British Gas engineers recognised the risks and devised a scheme to replace old ductile iron pipework.

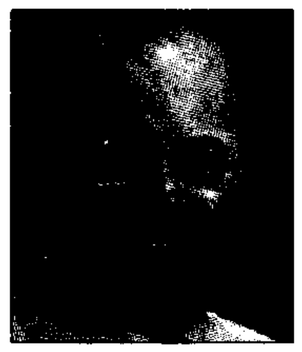
In the early 1990s the company even developed a national plan for the work but passed responsibility to local managers with no central control and ultimately to little effect. Another fatality caused by the same fault in 1995, in Derbyshire, produced just more talk. Even a replacement scheme agreed at a special conference that year was never implemented.

Throughout the 1990s, of the 21,000 kilometres of vulnerable ductile iron pipe (of which 2,360 ran within 30 metres of property), the company replaced only around 100kms a year. The judge could find no explanation for what prosecuting counsel called a "derisory" response that led to "an accident waiting to happen", nor the simultaneous scaling back of the programme dating from the days when British Gas was publicly owned to replace equally dangerous cast iron pipes. All he could offer was the observation: "It is of some note, however, that in the mid 90s, there had been sharp cuts in staff and other cost saving exercises carried out throughout the company", while "billions were being spent on re-organising the structure of the enterprise".

By 1999 British Gas had a turnover of £5bn, pre-tax profits of more than £1bn and was paying dividends to its shareholders of around £300m each year. The men at the top had been busy selling off the retail arm of the company as Centrica in 1997 (renaming itself "BG") and preparing to "de-merge" the Transco pipeline business in 2000 through the flotation of Lattice plc – a deal that would yield more for shareholders with costs on troublesome matters like maintaining safe pipes kept to a minimum in the period leading up to the deal.

In the years British Gas was quietly neglecting its pipelines in favour of stock market deals, with ultimately fatal consequences, the company's board was hitting the headlines as the ultimate fat cats. Remember how the unions took a pig called Cedric to the 1995 AGM in protest against the enormous pay rises of chief executive Cedric Brown and chairman Richard Giordano? But while Brown was forced out, the man who eventually succeeded him in February 1997, David Varney (pictured), continued to be rewarded equally generously. When Varney stepped down at the end of 2000 following the Lattice de-merger, he trousered an £806,000 pay-off, taking his final year's package to £1.26m. (Four years later he landed the chairmanship of HM Revenue & Customs, partly on the strength of having "steered [BG] to a significant uplift in performance and a highly successful de-merger".) Giordano, meanwhile, retired at the end of 2003 with £970,000 to cover the costs of his own office in New York and other perks, including free tax advice and private healthcare.

While Varney led the whole BG group for three years leading up to the Larkhall explosion, the man at the helm of its Transco division was Philip Nolan. His subsequent career has taken a similarly upward trajectory: he is now chief executive of privatised Irish phone company Eircom and, in a fawning interview by the *Observer*'s business editor Frank Kane last month declared that "to be chairman of a FTSE company is an obvious ambition".



Meanwhile the man who held the purse strings that could be loosened for corporate finance but not for crucial safety work was British Gas finance director from July 1996, Philip Hampton. Just like Varney, Hampton recently caught "new" Labour's eye and earlier this year completed a government review of business regulation. Among his main conclusions, currently being enacted, were proposals for radical changes to... health and safety inspections.

Transco meanwhile has shown a complete absence of remorse. Right up until the verdict it insisted the explosion was caused by a faulty pipe in the house in Larkham for which it was not responsible – despite, in the judge's withering summing up, "overwhelming evidence to the contrary including the views of their own employees on site after the explosion". Last week the company decided not to appeal, but still wouldn't say sorry for causing it.

PS Transco was originally charged with "culpable homicide" as well as health and safety offences. Appeal judges struck out the charge two years ago as no individual could be named. Meanwhile, as this and recent cases such as the deaths on Shell platforms (see *Eye* 1132) and last week's Railtrack judgment demonstrate, the need for the long-promised corporate killing laws both north and south of the border remains as urgent as ever.

PRIVATISING AFRICA

From DfID with love

MORE on the campaign by the department for international development (DfID) to persuade the people of poverty-stricken Sierra Leone that they should privatise their main water company.

DfID insists it is using British aid money to fund an information campaign and denies it is *promoting* privatisation in any way. Yet its own project memorandum and terms of reference describe a British-funded "public awareness campaign" aimed at countering "public resistance" to privatisation.

In reality DfID is using aid money to pay British PR advisers to persuade Sierra Leoneans that privatisation is what they want.

As well as funding pro-privatization spin-doctors, DfID will also pay for advertisements in the local press. Its documents make clear this PR push is needed because of the "danger" that "public resistance to the divestiture of enterprises seen as a 'public good', together with fear for the implications of the cost of service" will lead to opposition to the water sell-off.

The documents also make it clear there is so far no groundswell of opinion in favour of privatization. Instead, "privatisation activities [will] gain public support through a comprehensive communications and public awareness programme". In other words, Freetowners will want their water sold-off after the DfID-funded propaganda blitz.

NUCLEAR POWER

Jobs for the girls

TONY BLAIR's government has secretly decided to make sure that new nuclear power stations will be built, having persuaded itself that even John Prescott's renewable wind power can never be enough for the UK economy. And it has carefully put in place people who will come up with the right answers.

Back has come Sir Anthony Cleaver, as we reported in *Eye* 1132. He was appointed chairman of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority last year, his main task being to make it look as if he knows how to clear up all the nuclear waste around the country so that everyone agrees we can produce some more.

Cleaver knows a thing or two about nuclear waste, having run the Atomic Energy Authority (AEA) in the 1990s when it contracted out most of the work at Dounreay. This led to a damning 1998 report by the health and safety executive (HSE) which stopped any more decommissioning there.

More recently Cleaver was in charge of the government's disastrous E-Universities project, launched in 2000, which spent £55m but managed to enrol a mere 900 students – a cost of £60,000 per student. The education select committee described the bonus he was paid as "wholly unacceptable and morally indefensible".

He has a worthy successor as chairman of the AEA in the form of Barbara Thomas, aka Lady Judge, an American businesswoman who is married to the former Conservative party director-general Sir Paul Judge. (See "Woman in the *Eye*", *Eye* 1131.) Her appointment was announced last year by the then industry secretary Patricia Hewitt. Hewitt was also minister for women at the time, but that didn't dim her admiration – even though Thomas is famous in Fleet Street as a close friend of Richard Desmond, who offered her 10 percent of the shares in his Fantasy Channel as a reward for her services in launching his porn TV empire. Thomas also happens to be a US citizen and Britain used to keep its nuclear secrets away from the Americans, but that didn't seem to worry Hewitt either.

Indeed, the minister obviously rated Thomas highly: at about the same time as making her chairman of the AEA she put her on a DTI board and made her deputy chairman of the financial reporting council. Other ministers also helped to make 2004 a bumper year for Thomas, as she was appointed to the board of the department of constitutional affairs by Lord "Call me a Charlie" Falconer, and to the board of the Wallace Collection by the Rev Blair himself.

Yet it isn't as if she had lots of spare time when the government's finger suddenly pointed at her. Thomas already held eight directorships with stock exchange companies – chairman of PEI plc and Axon plc, deputy chairman of Friends Provident plc (which was fined £450,000 for mis-selling pensions and £675,000 for mis-selling mortgages under her leadership), and a board member of Capital Radio, Quintain Estates, Portmeirion and Virgin Vie.

The civil servant who advised Hewitt on the appointment was Joan MacNaughton (pictured), head of the energy division at the DTI – who is almost as well connected as Thomas. Her husband, Bill Jeffery, is well known to *Eye* readers as the man who presided over a succession of fiascos as head of the immigration service at the home office.

Jeffery is also close to the prime minister, who promoted him in April to be his security and intelligence coordinator in the cabinet office.

With her many other jobs for the DTI, Thomas had already befriended MacNaughton – and in January last year got her a non-executive directorship at Quintain Estates. (Under "new" Labour, senior civil servants are encouraged to become more "business-minded" by moon-lighting in the private sector.) Lo and behold, when the AEA chairmanship vacancy came up, MacNaughton recommended… Barbara Thomas!

We asked the DTI if MacNaughton had indeed been responsible for choosing Thomas – and if it was true, as the *Eye* had heard, that last summer Thomas invited MacNaughton and Bill Jeffery on holiday to her house in the south of France. "Barbara Thomas Judge was appointed Chair of UKAEA according to the Nolan principles in line with the Code of the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA)," the DTI told the *Eye* last week. "A selection panel chaired by Energy Director General Joan MacNaughton and including an independent OCPA representative, interviewed candidates and made a recommendation for the post based on aptitude and merit," a spokesman replied. "Ms Thomas was already a non-executive Member of the UKAEA Board, an appointment that didn't involve Joan MacNaughton, and was nominated by the outgoing Chair. She was a strong candidate and her appointment was made by the then Secretary of State Patricia Hewitt and approved by the prime minister. Holiday arrangements are a private matter with no bearing on the above."

So that's all right then. The "morally indefensible" Cleaver is in charge of decommissioning and "ten jobs" Thomas is in charge of five disintegrating nuclear power stations which can't produce any electricity because it would be too dangerous. Everyone can live happily ever after… except those who are due to have the new nuclear dumps or generators built in their neighbourhoods.

LONDON EYE

How BA pays FA

THE spat between the South Bank Centre and the London Eye over how much rent the big wheel operator should pay for having one of its legs on the centre's land has exposed more about how the attraction was financed than its owners would probably have wished.

The London Eye is owned equally by British Airways, Madame Tussauds and architects Marks Byfield, which between them put in £200 for the shares, while the real funding came in the form of a £48m loan from BA at an apparently exorbitant interest rate of 25 percent.

Unable to service this debt fully despite making decent profits on running the wheel, the London Eye owed BA £130m at the end of 2003. Owing £50m more than it has in assets, the company's accounts show that it was saved from insolvency by BA's agreement that it only has to pay back the loan and interest "when it has sufficient surplus cash to do so".

It was left to the project director of the London Eye when it was being built, Paul Baxter, to explain how an apparently successful commercial venture could be in such a parlous financial state. Last week he described how "the so-called crippling debt is a simple financial mechanism to provide BA with a cash sweep at the end of every year." In other words, it's a way of extracting the profits.

But why do it this way rather than by the more usual method of drawing dividends? BA wouldn't comment; but by paying millions in tax-deductible interest, the London Eye ensures that the taxable profits it would otherwise record (around £10 to £12m annually) are reduced to nothing. Meanwhile BA knew it wouldn't pay any tax on the interest it earned as the company had racked up huge losses in the 1990s for which it would be given tax relief in later years. (The national flag carrier has paid no British tax on its profits for many years.)

The result is that what all concerned consider a profitable commercial operation makes no contribution to the exchequer, somewhat detracting from its proud boasts over the years that no public money was used to build it.

JARVIS

Bonus balls

WHILE several rats desert the sinking Jarvis (generally citing the company's move to York as the excuse), departing chief executive Alan Lovell has at least handed back half his £450,000 bonus to an out-of-pocket creditor.

This repayment is part of a restructuring deal that effectively passes the company to its bankers and without which it would almost certainly have gone under.

The bonus was awarded to Lovell in April in recognition of securing a rescue package that "draws a line under Jarvis's troubled financial history and enables us to focus on the future development of our promising core businesses of rail, roads and plant hire".

A few months on, having lurched from one crisis to another, the company has completed a debt-for-equity swap that sees its shares valued at less than 4p each, having lost 75 percent of their value since, er, a line was drawn under the company's troubled financial history five months ago. But only a glass-half-empty type of curmudgeon would question the £225,000 bonus Lovell is still collecting (on top of his £375,000 salary).

Another man who could only take so much of Jarvis is Andrew Lezala, the chief operating officer who, in chief executive Alan Lovell's words, "played an important role in helping the group through difficult times". In one particularly helpful episode Mr Lezala wrote to the *Guardian* denying the firm's responsibility for the fatal Potter's Bar train crash in 2002, only to be publicly corrected and rebuked the following day by the health and safety executive (HSE) investigator responsible for the case. Four weeks later the company was forced to admit liability.

In April this year Lezala left Jarvis to become chief executive of Metronet, the consortium whose members include Atkins, Balfour Beatty, Thames Water and one of Mr Lezala's former employers, Bombardier. Despite serious recent criticism from both Transport for London and the Commons transport select committee of its record in maintaining and upgrading its tube lines, the company has announced 345 job cuts. Documents leaked to *Channel 4 News* showed the total was in fact 630 (10 percent of the company's workforce), of which 46 are in engineering and safety. Such cost-cutting seems hard to reconcile with the vast improvements demanded in Metronet's woeful performance, especially when the consortium manages to share fat profits with its owners and their shareholders.

Number crunchings

£5m ■ Current value of Jarvis (once worth £1bn)

£55m ■ Amount spent in last financial year on lawyers' and bankers' fees for "rescue packages" to keep Jarvis going

ASYLUM

Hungry for change

FEARS are growing for the health of five Ugandan women asylum seekers who have been on prolonged hunger strike over their detention and planned deportations.

Two from the Yarl's Wood detention centre in Bedford were hospitalised before being returned to detention; and two others at the centre are also said to be weak. Despite her frailty, a fifth, Charity Mutebwa, was whisked out of Yarl's Wood, placed in a van and taken on a 12-hour drive to a detention centre in Scotland.

Few think it a coincidence that the transfer (which separated Mrs Mutebwa from her doctor, lawyer and supporters) followed a sympathetic hearing for her on BBC radio four's *Women's Hour*.

While her move has attracted outrage in Scotland – MSPs are calling for her immediate release and condemning the home office's treatment of her – little notice has been paid to the women in England. Legal Action for Women, which has taken up their cases, say that at least two further Ugandan women have been deported to an uncertain fate. "We know from the family of one of them that she was stopped by immigration officials who demanded all her money and she has now gone into hiding. There has been no contact with the other."

All of the women claim to have been the victim or rape or torture or both at the hands of either the Lord's Resistance Army, in the north of Uganda or by government troops elsewhere. Last month a report by Amnesty International confirmed the widespread use of rape and torture, particularly by the Lord's Resistance Army. It added: "Reports of torture by law enforcement officers, security agents and the army, persisted. Torture continued to be used to extract confessions and as a means of punishment."

Charity Mutebwa, a member of the opposition Reform Agenda for Democracy, says her brother was killed in front of her when she and her husband were arrested by the government army. Supporters paid an agent to spirit her out of the country. She has since heard that her husband has also now been killed. Her claims, like those of the other women, have all been rejected.

Legal Action for Women says all of the women's cases have suffered because of poor or non-existent legal representation. None of the women was ever examined to obtain medical reports. Charity Mutebwa found out her case had failed because she had been represented by a translator, not a lawyer.

The home office declined to talk about Charity's case or that of the other hunger strikers, other than to say that any decision to move an individual "follows a risk assessment and suitable beds being available and that their health was being monitored and appropriate medical and other attention sought when necessary".

The home office's claim that by last Friday there was no longer any Ugandan hunger striker in Yarl's Wood was disputed by Legal Action for Women. A spokeswoman said: "There are four including the two who have returned from hospital and who have resumed their decision to only take water in Yarl's Wood," said a spokeswoman. "The home office is happy to say a hunger strike is 'off' even if a woman has one sip of milk with which to swallow medication and throws it straight back up."

Originally there were more than five women on hunger strike but some have called off their protest having secured proper legal representation or been released. The five remaining women's lawyers are now mounting a legal action to secure their release on health grounds. Meanwhile over the phone from Dungavel detention centre in Lanarkshire, a weak but determined Charity told the *Eye* : "I would rather die here than back in Uganda."

Alan Donnelly – An apology

In an article entitled "Sovereign Power" published in our edition of 19 August to 1 September we suggested that Alan Donnelly, the former Labour MEP, and now executive chairman of Sovereign Strategy Ltd, had received fees of some £7.5m over three years from Federation Internationale Automobile (the "FIA"), the governing body of Formula One Racing, and that these funds had been paid to Mr Donnelly personally rather than to Sovereign.

Mr Donnelly tells us, and we accept, that he never received these payments from the FIA and that the sums it has paid to Sovereign have never exceeded £80,000 a year. Indeed in July 2005 the high court made a declaration against *Business F1* magazine (where these allegations were originally published) that they were untrue. In addition, in a recent edition *Business F1* withdrew the allegations and apologised to Mr Donnelly for making them.

We apologise to Mr Donnelly for these inaccuracies and are glad to set the record straight.

POLICE 5

Look, no baton charges

THE crown prosecution service's (CPS) decision not to prosecute any of the Greater Manchester police officers who were seen on closed circuit television kicking a black man while he was being held down has attracted unprecedented criticism from the officers' own colleagues.

The Greater Manchester Black and Asian Police Association (BAPA) has produced its own report on the incident in which officers restrained Delbo King, a former paratrooper, for being drunk and smashing up a bus stop.

In what have been described as scenes reminiscent of the assault by Los Angeles police on Rodney King, the officers are seen to fire pepper spray into Delbo King's face before forcing him to the ground with their batons. An unnamed officer then kicked Mr King as he was held down on the pavement.

Delbo King suffered a broken tooth and bruising over his body. But after an investigation by West Yorkshire police, the CPS decided there was insufficient evidence to prosecute any of the officers – not even the one who administered the kicking.

Greater Manchester police said it took all allegations affecting the force seriously and that it had referred the matter to the then police complaints authority (PCA). "There has never been any suggestion that the alleged assault was racially motivated," said a spokesman.

Not so. As the BAPA report says, there was indeed an allegations that racism may have been a factor. BAPA itself had written to both the PCA and to the chief constable of Greater Manchester saying it regarded the incident as racially motivated and that it should be investigated as such.

The BAPA report says: "Since the conclusion of the investigation it has been confirmed that the Delbo King incident was never recorded as a racist incident in accordance with GMP policy. This alone serves to re-enforce scepticism of the investigation process."

Because the incident occurred before the new independent police complaints commission (IPCC) was set up, the decision over whether or not the officers will face disciplinary procedures rests with Greater Manchester. No one, least of all BAPA, is holding their breath; and Mr King is likely to have to seek redress through the civil courts.

CAFCASS

Glad, confident moaning?

CONFUSION reigns at Cafcass, the troubled court service for vulnerable children, over how well the four-year-old outfit is doing.

Listen to board chairwoman Baroness

Pitkeathley (left) and you get the impression things are improving. "Looking back over the events of 2004-5, I would describe it as the years when Cafcass turned a corner and found a fresh sense of purpose, confidence and self-belief," she writes in the latest annual report.

Examine leaked letters from Anthony Douglas, Cafcass's latest chief executive, however, and little seems to have changed for needy children or disgruntled staff as Cafcass struggles with a £4m deficit.

Most worrying of all is that 18 months after Cafcass claimed to have cleared its backlog, there are still around 1,000 children involved in care and acrimonious divorce proceedings who have yet to be allocated a court guardian.

Cafcass could meet its statutory duty to them by allocating their cases to the self-employed guardians; but Douglas is planning to spend less on guardians in future – £4m less, to be precise.

In a letter to Maria Eagle, junior minister for children, he outlines other emergency measures to cut costs. These include increasing the workload of already overworked staff and not filling vacancies. He also suggests interviewing families and children in offices rather than in homes"unless a home assessment is essential to a risk assessment".

Even with these cuts the predicted deficit will still be £1.6m. Douglas says this will mean a lower pay settlement for staff and the self-employed guardians at a time when he wants to boost productivity. "We hope that these measures can be implemented without compromising service delivery levels." Hm.

Douglas says there must be enough funding for IT, training and supervision in areas where professional practice is not good enough; and he concludes this can only be done by restricting the time spent on cases (a move that led Carcass to a disastrous judicial review in its earlier days).

Thus Douglas is on a collision course with his staff over pay and remains under-resourced and overspent while trying to steer through reforms that may not even meet children's needs. If this is a "new sense of confidence", as Pitkeathley says, heaven help Cafcass and the children it's supposed to help.

FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS...

■ **FALMOUTH HARBOUR:** The fishy smell caused by the plans of Falmouth harbour commissioners (FHC) to allow ship-to-ship transfers of crude oil in Falmouth Bay is getting stronger. Not only does harbourmaster Captain Mark Sansom have his fingers in more than one pie (harbourmaster, chief executive of FHC and director of Triskel Marine Ltd, a company which could benefit from ship-to-ship transfers), but FHC chairman Andrew Bell is also in on the act.

At the last meeting of the management forum of the Fal & Helford special area of conservation (SAC), FHC were represented by Bell. He attended the meeting with guest speaker Captain John Slater, representing Fendercare, the outfit FHC wants to carry out the ship-to-ship oil transfer operation. Slater impressed upon his listeners Fendercare's credentials for conducting such operations and said there were negligible environmental risks.

Keen that the forum should be aware what an impressive company Fendercare is, Bell said it had recently been purchased by James Fisher plc, a FTSE 100 company. Without any embarrassment at the conflict of interest revealed, Bell said he was in a position to vouch for Fishers "because he had shares in them". So that's all right, then.

In the City

A NEW source of pressure on the remaining four major generic drug companies who have yet to settle with the department of health (DoH) over accusations of price fixing has been created by the $7.4bn takeover of American group Ivax Corporation by Israeli-based Teva Pharmaceuticals.

Ivax owns Norton Healthcare, one of the six suppliers of the blood-thinning agent warfarin and penicillin-based antibiotics to the NHS who are under investigation by the Serious Farce Office, as well as being sued by the DoH.

Announced at the end of July, the Teva deal is likely to concentrate the minds of Norton's new owners on how to get rid of an inherited problem about which they know nothing and probably care even less except that it might impair Teva's ability to do business with the largest drug buyer in the UK – one of the presumed reasons the US drug group Merck, which has enough problems with its anti-inflammatory product Vioxx, and the Indian group Ranbaxy have already settled civil actions brought by the DoH for £12m and £4.5m respectively.

Norton is one of the bigger suppliers of generics to the NHS and so a prime target of both litigation and investigation. Certain of the directors in charge at the time the alleged price-fixing cartel was operating from 1996 to 2000 have already left. Founder and chairman Isaac Kaye has also resigned from the Ivax board where he was deputy chief executive. Labour donor Kaye left Norton in 2003. He has denied any wrongdoing as have Norton and Ivax.

For multinationals civil litigation, even with possible criminal prosecutions attached, is often simply a case of opening the corporate chequebook and asking the other side how much will it take to make the problem go away. It would be surprising if Teva has not ensured that Ivax has made a provision to settle both the civil and criminal cases so that it will not be picking up the Norton tab. Certainly Norton can afford it. Profits last year were £92m. The company insists it is "cooperating fully" with the SFO investigation.

The added advantage of a settlement of the civil cases – the DoH has filed cases over warfarin, penicillin and the anti-ulcer drug ranitidine claiming £128m against up to ten suppliers, while in Scotland there are claims totalling another £20m – would be that it would be unlikely the companies would ultimately be prosecuted by the SFO. Ranitidine is not part of the SFO case.

Although the main six suppliers of warfarin and penicillin could still be charged, those with knowledge of the investigation believe it would be probable that a trial judge would agree that the public interest was not served by prosecuting a company that had already paid substantial compensation given that the company cannot be jailed but only fined.

That is presumably the gamble Merck and Ranbaxy have already taken. It would be surprising if Teva/Ivax did not take the same decision over Norton.

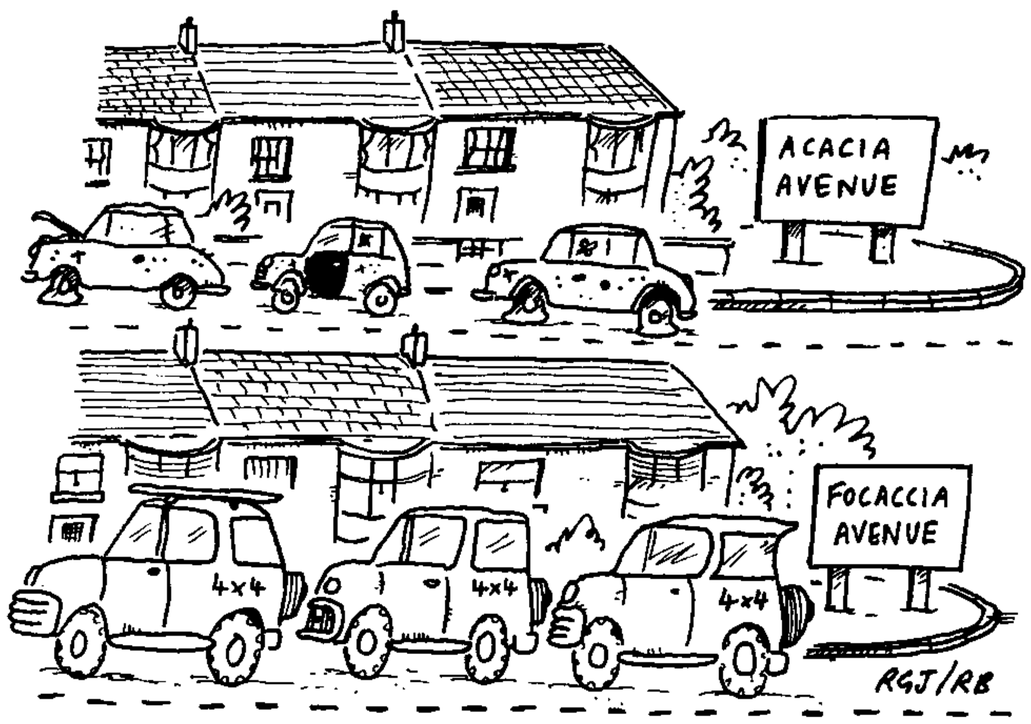
But the civil settlements, made with no admission of liability, will not be enough to save directors or executives from criminal charges. It is anticipated that charges will be brought against present or former directors of all six companies before the end of the year. It was initially expected that charges would be brought next month but now the word is that one or two directors or former directors from each company can be expected to receive an unpleasant Christmas present.

A Norton settlement would turn the spotlight firmly on the only British-listed company among the six main SFO targets – Goldshield and its chief executive, Ajit Patel. Goldshield, like all the companies, continues to insist it did nothing unlawful. However, the problem for Goldshield – as with the privately-owned Kent Pharmaceuticals and its chairman Denis O'Neill – is that it is not possible to separate the company from the man as is easily and regularly done by multinationals. So Goldshield and Kent would find it hard to do any deal that did not involve implicating their top suits.

The latest Kent accounts show that it spent £830,000 in 2004 fighting the civil cases and criminal investigation, bringing the legal spend in three years to £1.8m. At some stage O'Neill may need to decide whether he should or could do a deal which would allow the company to survive. For Patel such delicate questions are likely to confront the other Goldshield directors as and when their main man is charged.

The problem at Regent-GM Laboratories is different. The company is in liquidation. But that still leaves a potential liability for the directors, including the daughter of owner Nadhmi Auchi, which could distract from his business ambitions in Iraq.

The conspiracy to defraud charges now expected before Christmas against up to 10 directors and six to eight companies will only kick off what could be a long pre-trial legal battle which could last into 2007. Only if the companies lose the likely legal challenges, in particular over the issue that price fixing was not a criminal offence before the enterprise act 2002, will the proposed two trials take place. And only then is it likely to see who will make the final cut and appear in the dock.



WHILE the liquidators' civil action against the Bank of England over the Bank of Conmen & Cocaine International (BCCI) will soon resume its grindingly slow process for a second year in the high court, equally slowly the day of judgment for BCCI's auditor Price Waterhouse (as was) is also finally getting nearer – more than 14 years after the bank collapsed.

Since 1992 the beancounters' Joint Disciplinary Scheme has been trying to get to grips with those PW auditors who either could not or would not see what was really happening inside the rogue bank before it vanished into a £10bn black hole. For six years PW delayed any investigation at all into its actions thanks to a ludicrously sympathetic ruling from the court of appeal which decided that civil litigation brought by the liquidators had to go first.

PW settled that claim in 1998 but then further delaying tactics were introduced on the basis of the bank secrecy laws in the Cayman Island and the UK. These were only waived last year enabling the JDS to complete its investigation and bring charges this year against PW, now part of PricewaterhouseCoopers.

A tribunal is expected to consider the complaints but it could be that instead of a lengthy hearing and appeal process the matter will be settled with admissions of poor behaviour and an agreed fine by PwC. Because after so many years most if not all of those most closely involved and responsible are (like PW itself) either dead or no longer accountants. So the firm will have achieved the very object it set out to achieve when it persuaded the courts to halt the disciplinary investigation. It will be able to say this was all very regrettable but happened a long, long time ago and is no longer relevant.

BCCI is a classic case of regulation delayed being regulation denied and provides a lesson for any similar future scandal. The JDS probe of Equitable Life has been subject to delays, although nothing like those with BCCI, because of the Equitable litigation against auditors Ernst & Young which appears poised for possible settlement on terms more likely to favour the auditors. But any victory for E&Y will be shortlived. The JDS complaints are filed and the

THE DIRECTORS
DREDGE & RIGG
BUSINESS FORUM
WE WOULDN'T TRANSPORT THE TOLPUDDLE MARTYRS NOW — OH, NO…
…WE'RE MUCH TOO CIVILISED
S FORUM
WE'D TRANSPORT THEIR JOBS INSTEAD!

tribunal is expected to start business early next year. Beating that Equitable rap will be much more difficult given Equitable's near collapse.

The JDS has now been replaced by the Accountancy Investigation & Disciplinary Board which has so far managed to accumulate just two probes – Mayflower Corporation and MG Rover. It is to be hoped that it or the courts do not give in or agree to similar shameful delaying tactics on these investigations.

EXPLOITING the current enthusiasm for all things Russian, investors will next month be offered shares in International Marketing & Sales Group whose Moscow-based British founder is Greg Thain. IMSG is expected to float on AIM.

Those whose City memories stretch back to the dim and distant 80s and the Stock Exchange's Third Market which, via the Unlisted Securities Market became AIM, will no doubt remember Thain – but perhaps not too fondly.

In 1987 the then thirtysomething Greg was managing director of one of the first minnows to list on the Third Market – Publishing Holdings, whose titles included *What Investment?* (A question which soon provided the answer: not Publishing Holdings.)

The shares rushed up to 78p on hopes for the magazines and the group's database interests. But the impact of the stock market crash in October 1987 sent the company into swift decline. Profit warnings in early 1988 lead to a loss of £560,000 for 1987 and the sale of the magazines and a change of name to International Communication & Data. By 1989 the shares were below 20p.

Thain continued with the database business until 1993 when he resigned after a management shake-up following a reversal from profits of £1.1m to losses of almost £500,000. The shares rose to 9p on the news. ICD was taken over at 14.5p two years later.

Thain swapped London for Moscow in 1995 and has now created another marketing and media group. Investors will hope this one fares better than the first.

THE all-too predictable sorry saga of online poker chip PartyGaming, whose shares fell by a third (a mere £2bn) on news just ten weeks after the flotation that growth had suddenly and substantially slowed, proves one of the immutable laws for evaluating a new issue. Is the money being raised by the share sale going back into the company or only into the bank accounts of the directors? The more the founders are cashing in the more investors should stay away.

The four publicity-shy but cash-hungry PartyGaming founders pocketed £1bn cash and were left with a big stake riding for free on the online poker boom with any future profits a bonus. Whatever happened to the PartyGaming share price, they had already won big leaving investors to take all the risk. The shares are now below the issue price.

Such a risk-averse policy was smart. It would only take the arrest of one online gaming executive by the American authorities – who say it is illegal under US law – or the similarly encouraged ban on US credit card companies facilitating payments by players, and the boom would be another dot-com bust.

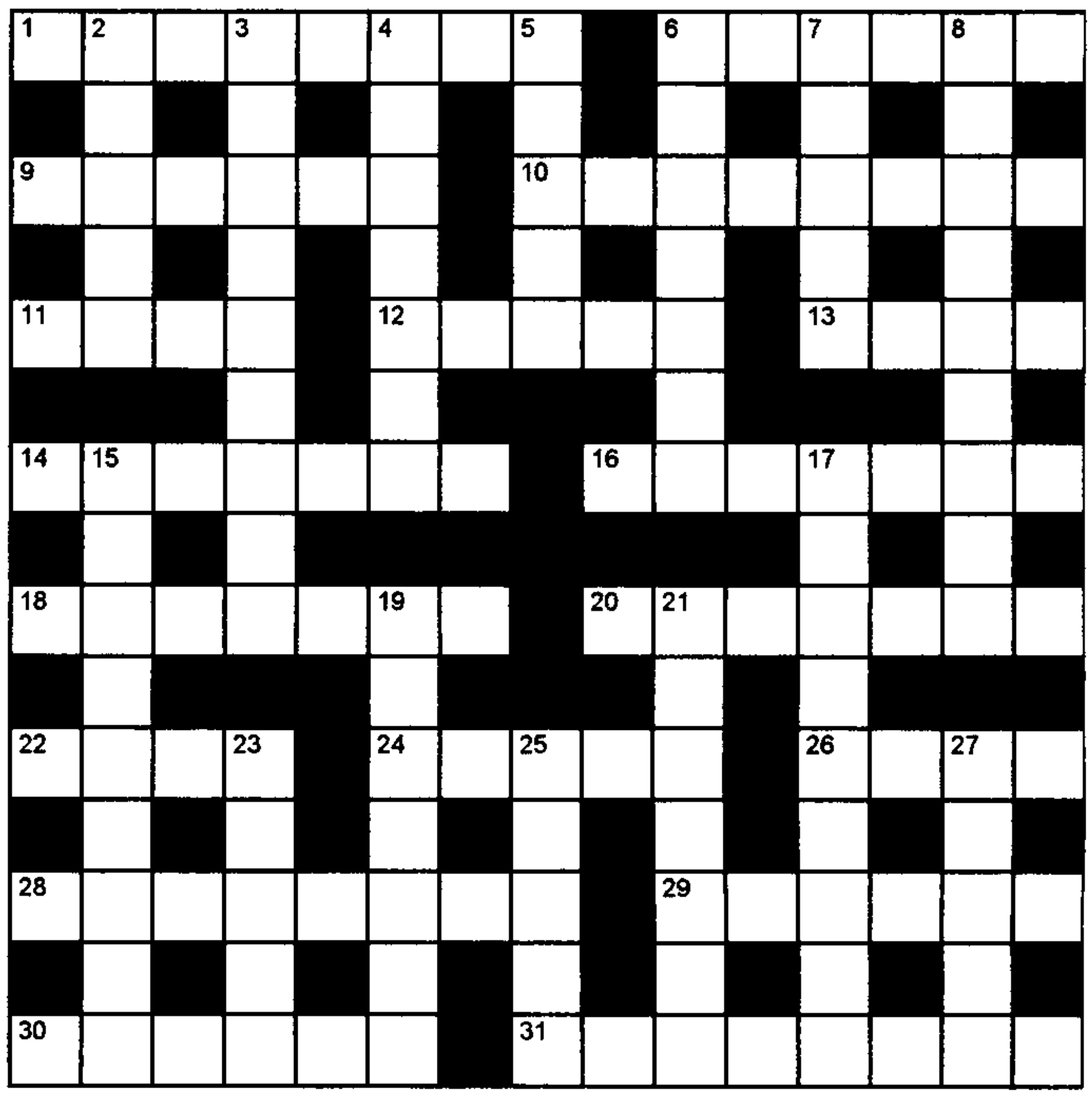
The online casino business depends for most of its revenues and growth on the US. Those running the online casino businesses most certainly are not gamblers so it is a good idea to hedge their bets against bad news by cashing in as much as possible now.

Those pondering similar online casino issues, such as next up 888.com which is also based in the tax haven of Gibraltar, would do well to see just how much the owners are taking out and how much they are taking the same risk as the public on future fashions or legal actions. The online casino fortunes, like those of Las Vegas' casino owners, have been built on losers. Those chasing this latest fad have now seen that losers can include investors as well as gamblers – but never the "house".

'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 296

by Cyclops



£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 23 September 2005

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk

ACROSS

1 Play the Queen produces: *Bill Overturned by Politician* ("one needing rustic shag") (4,2,2)
6 Dodgy jokes about head from Philip in Macedonia (6)
9 Pure heroin's in order (6)
10 Screwed rugby player and relaxed (4,4)
11 Potential bogey of hundreds going arse over tip (4)
12 Roger's material (5)
13 Start to take piss - how cute (4)
14/16/28 Intercourse with a large number of nuts spouting Birtspeak? (7,1,4,2,8)
18 Rather childish EU, right pile of crap (7)
20 Leave bad beer – dodgy (4,3)
22 What's left of fag hag bust (4)
24 Ten pointless years screwing around – they reveal the inner person (1-4)
26 *Hello*'s "First Sightings of Hurley in Yummy Anorak!" (4)
28 See 14
29 A Lib Dem's blown me away – the things he just comes out with! (2,4)
30 Nod off gobbling kinky sod most likely (4-2)
31 In which sporty hacks firmly apply genitalia protection (5,3)

DOWN

2 A Pole mounting female fond of a lay? That's not rude! (5)
3 Urethra the Scoffer (4-5)
4 Pisspoor senator's betrayal of what he stands for (7)
5 Having an erection around Monica, all over a hot dish (5)
6 Too much booze is bad when Kelvin gets stuck in (7)
7 What Brenda holds, occasionally, on sex revolution (5)
8 Kennedy to press boss: "Dicky was a wanker" (6,3)
15 Pisspoor, old hat duo's *Maturity* (9)
17 Horse's crap in booze – rats! (9)
19 The French team rip off dictionary (7)
21 Lying thus is the end for the likes of Kim Il Sung (2,5)
23 Parties utter crap (5)
25 Moralistic author the drink knocked up at work (5)
27 A lout with a hygiene problem is still a lout (5)

Crossword 295 winner: RHIANNON WILLIAMS

ACROSS: 1 Send up 5 Frottage 9 Chic 10 Lousy 11 Tits 12 Stuck up bitch 14 Sobriety 15 Choker 17 Bureau 19 Appeaser 21 Backstabbing 24 Limb 26 Muck 27 Unbeaten 28 Senate.

DOWN: 2 Echo 3 Duck's arse 4 Pollute 5 Flunkey 6/25 Olympic Games 7 Tutti 8 Get screwed 13 Copulation 16 Orangeman 18 Uptight 19 Albumen 20 Priests 22 Keble 23 Scot.

HUSBAND

Aye up... Did they reach a verdict on Jake?
BAR
Guilty on the grounds of diminished responsibility
What's that mean?
He's fucking mental.... pint please luv

Too old to fight

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This is Rifleman Lalbahadur Thapa (L) aged 93 and his younger brother Rifleman Dilbahadur Thapa. Both served with 6th Gurkha Rifles throughout World War Two.

The brothers keep each other company on the five day walk they make every three months from their home village to the nearest Gurkha Welfare Trust Area Welfare Centre to collect their 'welfare pension'. This money is their only source of income and all that stands between them and destitution.

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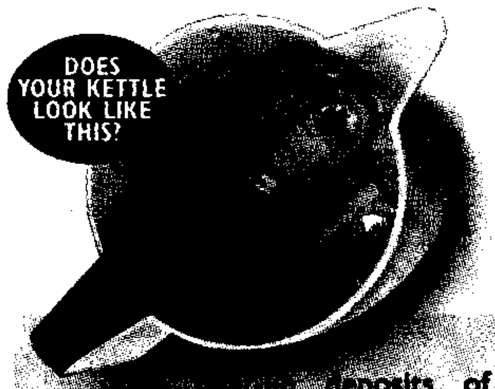

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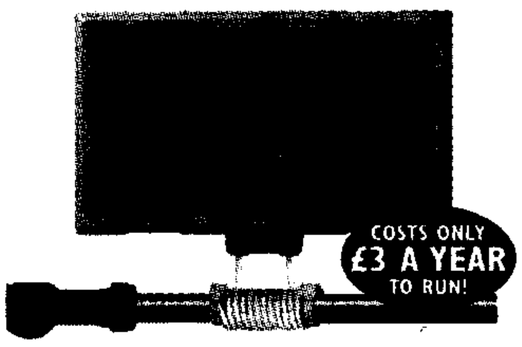

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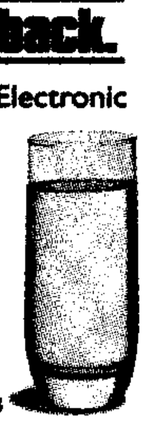

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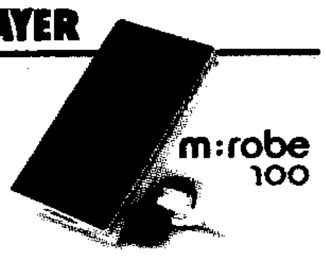

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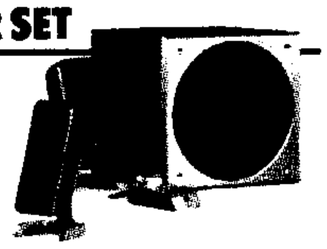

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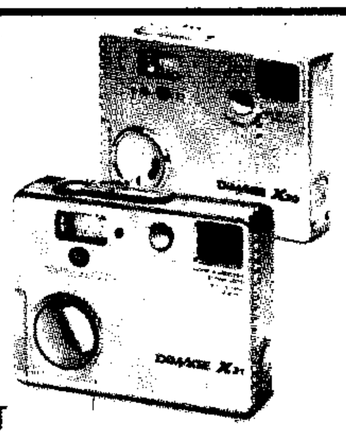

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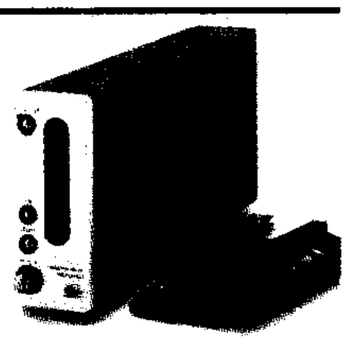

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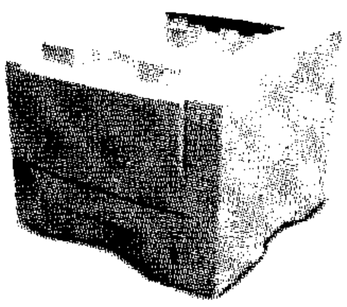

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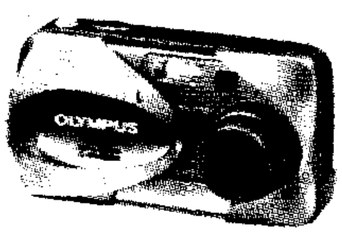

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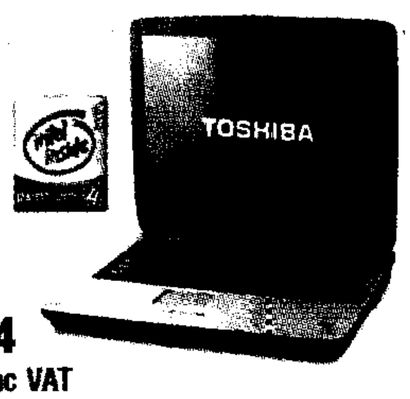

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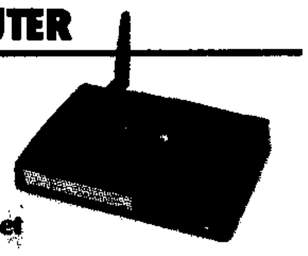

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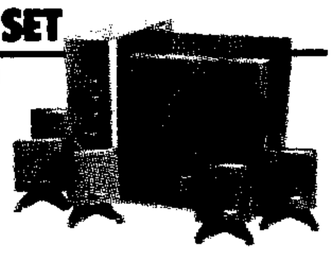

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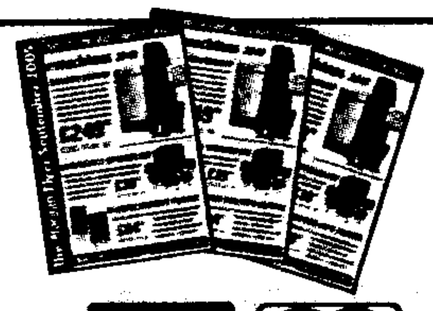

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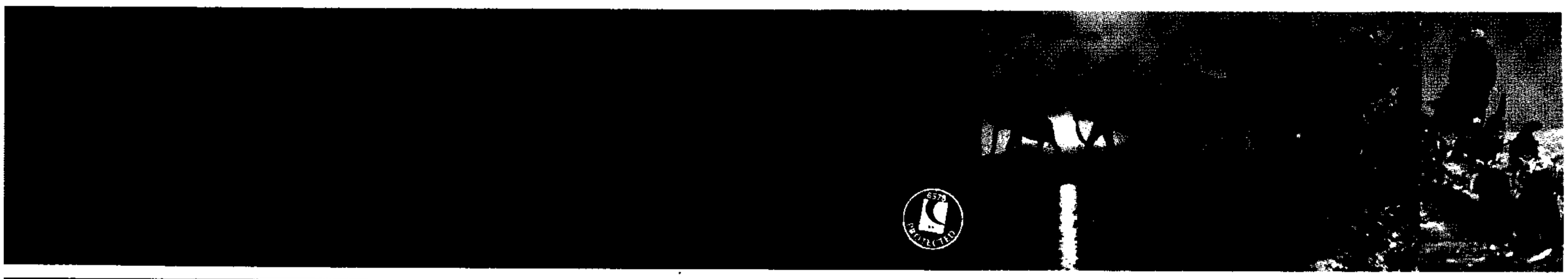

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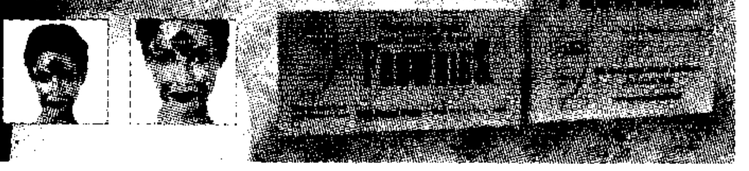

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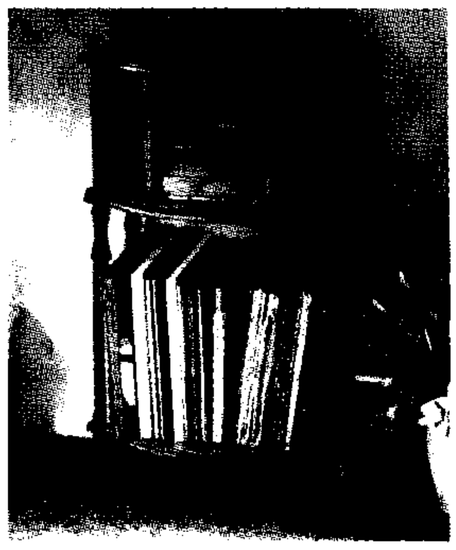

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This superbly crafted piece of furniture with its beautifully finished oak effect veneer will not only make an elegant centrepiece in your home, but lift the lid and it will play LPs, 45s and even your old 78s.

Enjoy your cassette tapes and CDs in glorious stereo sound. There's a MW/FM radio with a delightfully old-fashioned illuminated dial too and the speakers are inbuilt so no need for trailing wires and cumbersome boxes.

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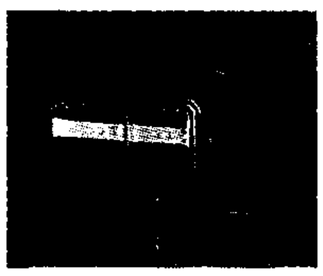
The matching stand has a shelf that can be set at a high or low level to store your records or a favourite ornament, but the music centre can be used without the stand if you prefer.

Music centre measures: Height 11¾", width 22" and depth 14".
On stand it measures: Height 35½", width 22" and depth 14".

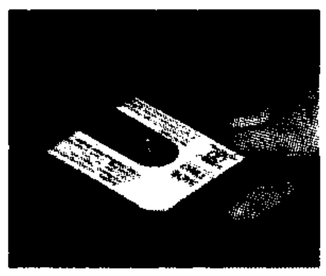
Mains powered. Lead and 13A plug supplied. 10-15W PMPO. Remote control requires 2 AAA batteries (included). Legs/shelf flat-packed for easy assembly.

LPs, Singles & 78s



MW/FM Radio

Compact discs



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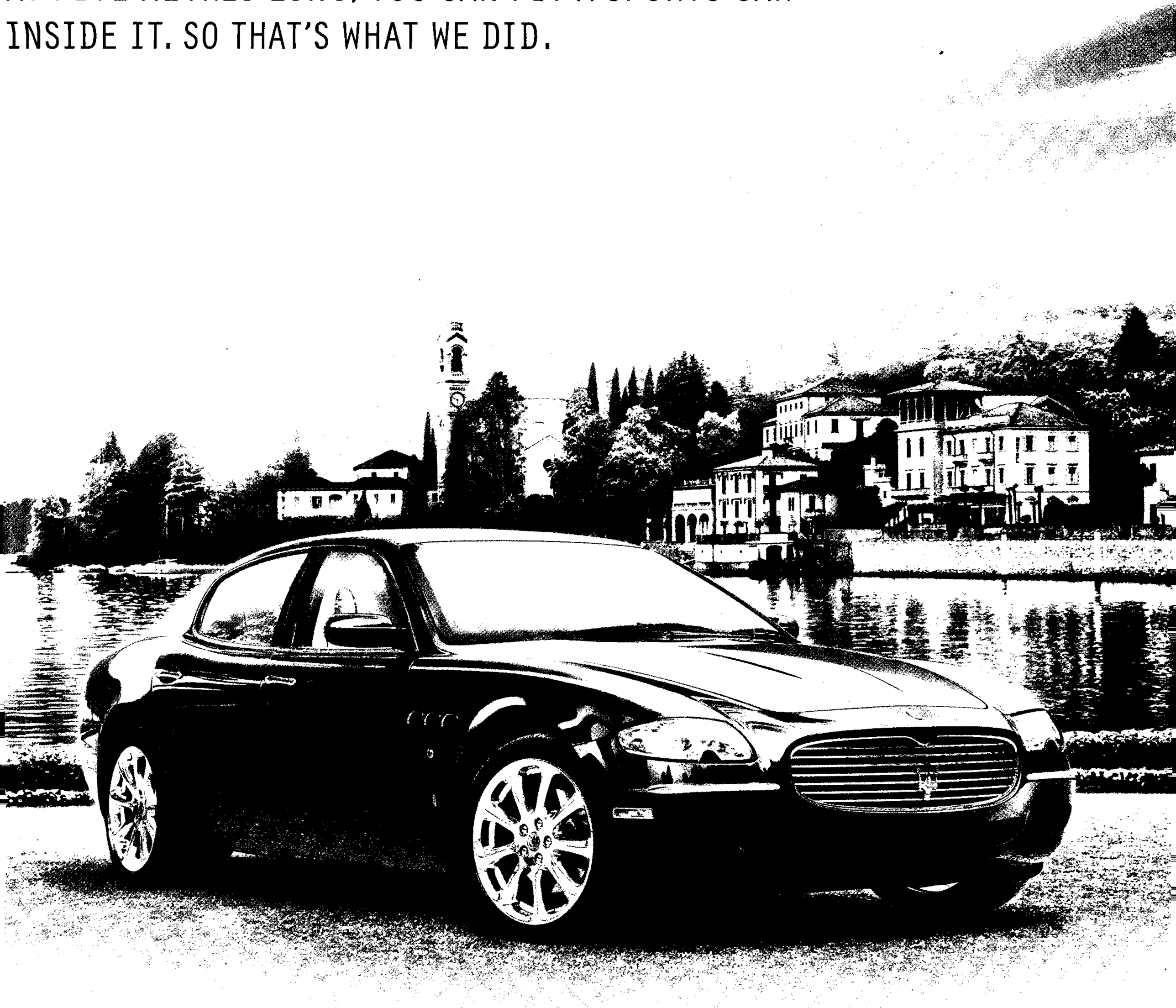

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PHILOSOPHY STUDENT needs help to reform local hoodlums. S/C: 40-34-18. A/C: 22604302.

MATURE SMOKER implores help to spread peace 'n' love. S/C: 11-05-54. A/C: 00653629.

ALMOND MACAROON connoisseur, help me enjoy this expensive morsel. S/C: 09-01-26. A/C: 28154245.

RECENTLY DIAGNOSED with manic depression, need to restart life, lost house/job, debts, divorce. Please help. S/C: 20-57-40. A/C: 40770299.

DESPERATE: Mature student not eligible for loan, in debt. Need help. SC: 95-04-07. AC: 6-11-73774.

MASTERS, SOMERVILLE, OXFORD. Need help raising final £5,000 for this wonderful opportunity. S/C: 40-47-58. A/C: 91763563. Thank you.

STRUGGLING STUDENT, £22K debts, £10K+ *would relieve* the anxiety. Any contributions very appreciatively received. S/C: 40-47-17. A/C: 81836528. Thanks!

YOUNG GAY MAN needs funds to escape family persecution. Please help. S/C: 40-47-58 A/C: 41785419.

UK NURSE NEEDS MONEY to pay course fees. Halifax, S/C: 11-04-66. A/C: 00389379. Many thanks.

DESPERATE. Supported alcoholic unemployed husband and daughter. Please help. £30K debts from marriage. HSBC, S/C 40-08-42. A/C: 81435442.

VOLUNTEER NEEDS £4000 for Africa trip. Thanks. Halifax, S/C: 11-06-63. A/C: 00980061.

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safespeed.org.uk facing closure. Help needed quickly. S/C: 82-68-11. A/C: 80480392.

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LAST RESORT, no family, no support! Please help. S/C: 30-98-00. A/C: 07263660.

HELP ME IF YOU CAN! Your kindness is truly needed. S/C: 60-05-14. A/C: 18027148, NatWest. Please. Thank you!

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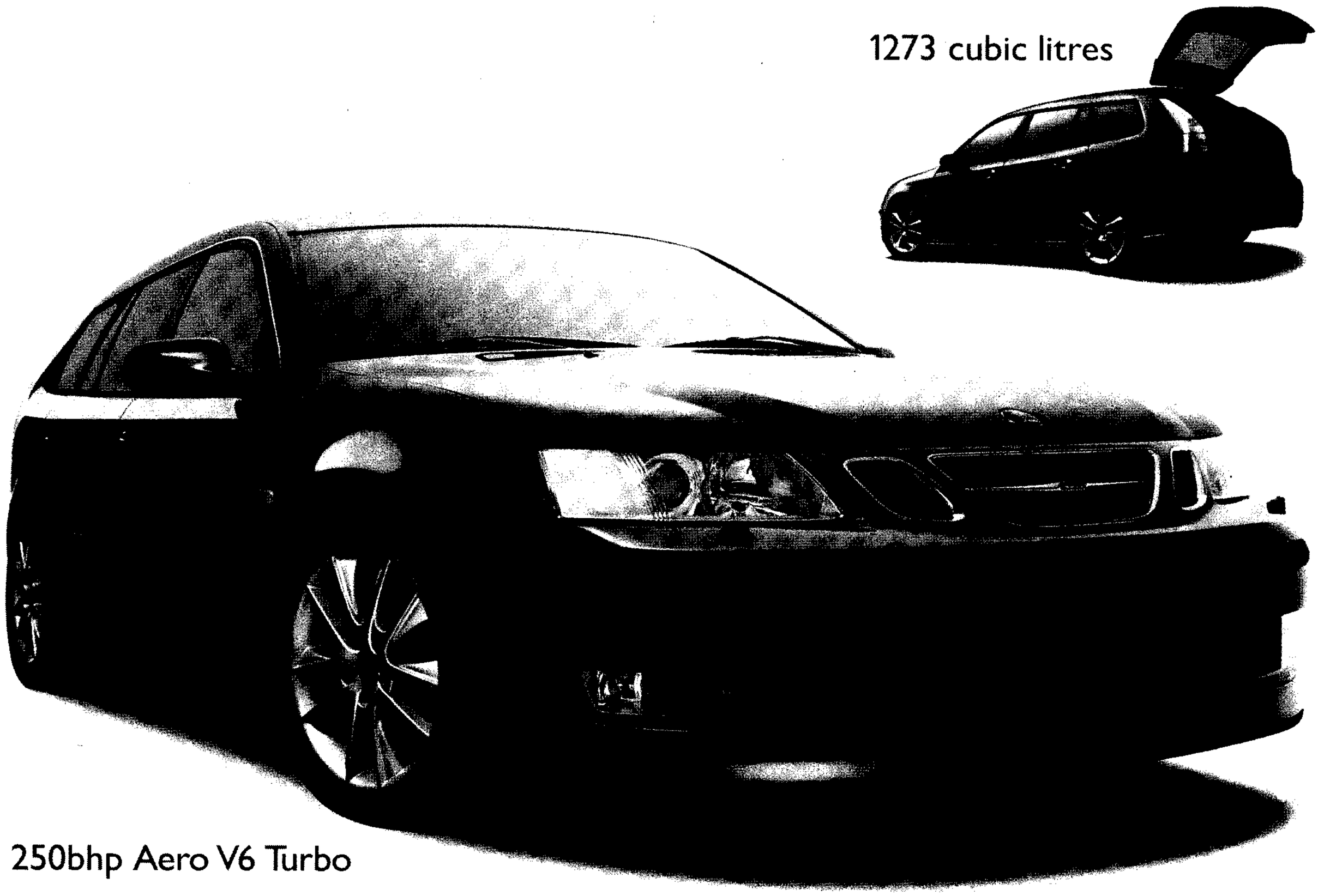

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